Encounter

August 1979 £1

Raymond Aron

From Yankee Imperialism to Soviet Hegemony?

Simon Jenkins
The Vanishing of 'The Times'

Max Beloff
Prejudice

Vilas Sarang
Story

European Diary:

London—Paris—Milan
Bonn—Rome

Luigi Barzini François Bondy
Lawrence Gowing Werner Höfer
Helmut Schoeck J.-F. Revel

Melvin J. Lasky
Helsinki & Moscow

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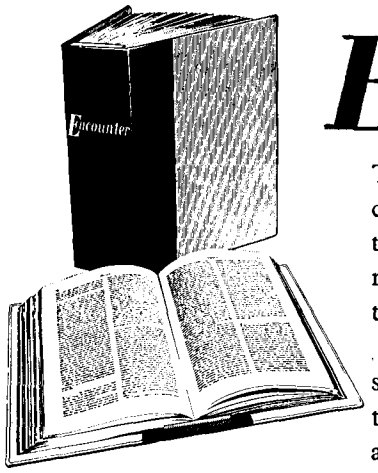

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MANAGING EDITOR: *Margot Walmsley* ASSISTANT EDITOR: *Bryan Healing*
GENERAL MANAGER: *Anthony Robinson* ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER: *John Hall*
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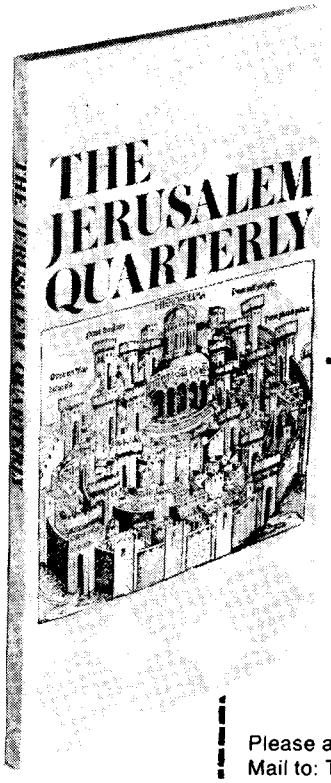

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Vilas Sarang

The Terrorist

I ARRIVED HERE in late summer. After searching for a couple of days, I found a room. It wasn't large, but it had a private bathroom, which seemed important to me.

For the first time in my life I was hit by truly searing heat, never having been north before. Accustomed to the humid, coastal weather of the south, my nose felt constantly dry. The walls of my room were hot to the touch, and so was my bed at night. Sleep seemed impossible. I got up early each morning, took a bath, and left for work. I got into the habit of looking in the window of a shabby restaurant on the way. On a board in the window I saw a large aluminium pan heaped with boiled sheep's heads. The skin had been loosened by cooking, further exposing their teeth, so that they appeared to be grimacing with dilated eyes. The restaurant boy used to skin the heads one by one, leaving the skulls bare. He gathered everything—skin, brain, tongue, eyes, and the rest—on a plate, and carried it to the unkempt customer awaiting breakfast with sleep-laden eyes. (The thought of the mucus inside the sheep's throat and nostrils invaded my mind.) Then someone told me that the heads were boiled all night to cook them through and through. Tossing about on my hot mattress at night, I thought about the boiling sheep heads, and on the way to work in the morning I met the gaze of the eyes in the window.

I went to the Central Post Office my first week in town. I had to go to a first-floor office to rent a post office box. I had no intention of renting it for more than six months, but it turned out they could only be rented for a year at a time. I paid the rental fee and received my key. I looked at the number: 526. Five plus two is seven; seven plus six, thirteen; three plus one, four. An even number. I was pleased. I have a fear of odd numbers. Then I smiled to think that I was still caught up in such superstitions.

I came downstairs and went over to the post office box area to take a look at my own. The boxes were in a hall to the right of the main lobby. There were about ten rows of them, and the top row was well above my head. Anyone who had a box in that row would have to grope blindly about inside it. Not very pleasant, I thought, to feel about in an empty box above your head, your fingers shrinking from the cold touch of the metal, with perhaps a shiver travelling down your spine if you scraped the surface with your fingernail. On the other hand, the bottom row was only knee-high, which seemed equally awkward. You'd have to bend down with your hands on your knees, and peer into your box as if you were looking into a mousehole. Luckily my box was about shoulder-high. You opened it and looked straight in. I felt about inside the box, for no particular reason. A little dust remained on my fingers. Wiping them off I blew the dust off the bottom of the box. Then it struck me that I was being foolish. What was the point in examining my box? I certainly didn't expect to find anything inside. I was acting like someone looking over an apartment he was going to move into.

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I had been away from my home town, and at first I felt a little lost. But I soon got to know my way around town, which had been laid out according to a very simple plan. There was a long main street from east to west, intersected by another long, wide street with a network of smaller, parallel streets. The people looked different from people in the south. They were stocky and rugged, and not particularly polite, as I soon discovered. Walking through the streets was an annoying experience at first. People didn't pay any atten-

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tion to where they were going and seldom made way for others. I was constantly being bumped into, and my slight build made matters worse. Then I hit upon the idea of walking with my fists clenched, which is normally taken for a sign of anger, but in my case it was simply a practical measure. Your arms stay tense when your fists are clenched; they don't just hang down and get knocked about when someone bumps into you. On the contrary, it's the other person who is more likely to feel the effects of a collision. I've got used to walking with clenched fists now. When I see someone approaching and think that he might bump into me, my fists tighten instinctively, and I only relax when he has passed me by. Sometimes I keep my fists clenched even when there is no one around.

The town is neither large nor of any particular administrative or commercial importance. But since the Russians built a giant ammunition factory nearby, it has gained some prominence. A few subsidiary factories have been developed, and the population of the town has risen sharply. They say there are some five hundred Russians here. You don't see them much around town, since they live in a camp close to their factory. Their wives are often in the market though. I was in a grocery store once, with two Russian women beside me. A bag in one of the women's hands hit something, I heard a bottle break and then my nose was assailed by strong fumes of alcohol. The woman opened her bag in embarrassment, and liquor trickled out. "Oh madam, madam", the shopkeeper cried out in feigned shock, and began to make fun of the woman. The local liquor, powerful and clear, resembles vodka; the Russians seem to prefer it to beer or whisky.

As in the south, military police are posted at most streetcorners here. I've been asked to show my identity card a few times. When they see that I work in a box factory, they let me pass on without questions. I've noticed that regularly employed local residents aren't normally asked to show their cards, nor are white foreigners. It's those who look like strangers in dress or appearance who get stopped for the most part. Also, men between twenty and thirty-five years of age are often questioned. I'm in that age bracket, and, worse still, as a Southerner I stand out in a crowd. I realised that I'd be asked for my identification card frequently. Not that it matters, for my papers are in order.

At the post office entrance there is an ordinary policeman, who checks briefcases, bags, etc. I don't carry a briefcase; on one or two occasions I've had a paper bag with something I'd bought on the way, which the policeman checked.

FOR THE FIRST FEW DAYS after I got a post office box I went to check it anyway, though I didn't, of course, expect any mail. Once or twice I peered into the area behind the boxes through my box. There were long tables piled with mail back there. Of course I saw only a small part of that area. The woman who sorted the mail sat right in the middle of that part of the hall that I could see. Facing the rows of boxes she sat back against a wall, working briskly away. Once, as I watched her, my gaze must have distracted her. She looked up at me and smiled. I smiled too, and closed the box. Her smile lingered in my mind as I walked out of the post office. Then it occurred to me that, although I'd seen her face and part of her body, she had only seen my eyes and nose through the box; she hadn't seen me smile. I was a little upset at this and wondered if I should've raised my head and smiled so that my lips would have been visible in the box. But to smile while stupidly staring at the closed box above mine would have been absurd, and she too might have found it comical to look at a pair of lips smiling in a box. When I thought of this I laughed aloud, though I'm not the type who often laughs to himself in the street.

The first letter I received from the organisation came from "Joseph George", a choice of names which I admired. It was a safe one, since the Christians formed a minority community which was normally above suspicion. The letter was in response to the one I had sent upon my arrival, and which I had filled with superficial personal news. Now I wrote back to "Joseph George" in the same manner, except that I worked in a few significant details here and there.

When I came here I had thought that shortages would be less in evidence. In the south they are the order of the day of course, but I was in the north now, in a city close to the capital. Yet as winter approached, powdered milk disappeared from the market, eggs became scarce, and so on. Once I went to the grocer's to buy some detergent; in place of the familiar

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Camel brand I saw boxes of a new Lion brand labelled "New More Powerful Detergent", with the word *New* printed in bright, bold letters. I thought to myself that the Government called itself socialist, yet flaunted this sort of capitalistic advertising on products from its factories. I discovered that the new brand was more expensive. Then it dawned on me: since they claimed that there was no inflation in their régime they couldn't raise the prices of the old products, so they had simply taken the old brand off the market and replaced it with a new, costlier one; people would think that the brand was more expensive because it was "new" and "more powerful." What can really be new about detergent?

During my first few weeks here I used to go for a walk along the main street in the evening, a street which is lined with bars. They drank a lot of beer here. It's normal to order two or three bottles of beer immediately upon entering. Like other things beer is often in short supply, and a bar may run out of it early in the evening. So people order all the beer they want all at once. Of course it is frustrating, when you've had a bottle or two and want more, to learn that they're out of beer.

Though bars are crowded in the evening, the town shuts down early. Shops and restaurants close by ten o'clock. People drink their beer quickly, then eat and go to bed. I sometimes wandered about late into the evening. Since most places were closed, the streets were dark for the most part; the tailors' shops, however, stayed open past midnight. Beneath glaring fluorescent lights they patiently carried on with their cutting and sewing. People are fond of clothes in the north; they're forever having loud, flashy suits made. I fancied that the tailors, diligently studying measurements and marking lengths of cloth, were in fact devising plans for an uprising; some day they'd switch off their brilliant lights all at once and step out into the shadowy streets clutching their long, shiny scissors.

ONE DAY I WAS ABOUT TO open a letter I'd received when I glanced at the name on the envelope. It wasn't mine. I was puzzled for a moment, but then noticed that the P.O. box number was 536. The letter had obviously been put in my box by accident. I thought at first of going into the office to return it, but then I saw that the woman who did the sorting was nearby distributing the mail. To save trouble I knocked on the side of the box and drew her attention. "This isn't for me", I said. "Thanks", she replied and smiled. That smile again.

Two days later when I went to check my box I saw her sorting the mail. There was nothing in my box. I knocked on the box and said hello loudly. She looked up and waved with a smile. I'd been a little forward, but she seemed to be warm and responsive. Soon I got into the habit of looking for her when I went to the post office. Occasionally I said hello; I felt let down when she wasn't around. A few times I saw men talking to her. There was a door to her right that opened into another part of the office, where these men apparently worked. One time I watched a man standing beside her that I'd seen with her before. He was partially bald and had bushy eyebrows. I shut the box after a minute or two, not wanting to attract his attention inadvertently.

Once when I opened my box, I noticed that she was just distributing the mail. Since my own box was empty I knocked and asked, "Do you have anything for me?" I heard her footsteps, then her face appeared on the other side of my box. "Let me see", she said and checked the bunch in her hand. "Sorry, I don't have anything for you today." I stayed talking for a minute or two. A few days later this happened again. One day I brought her a bar of "Kit Kat", an English candy that boys sell in the street; it's smuggled, and therefore expensive. I reached my hand into the box and gave it to her. Saying "Thanks", she unwrapped it, reached back into the box, and offered me a piece. "I don't know your name yet", I said. "Dolores", she said. She was a Christian then. There's a large Christian population in the town, which has apparently been there for many generations. Most of them live in an older part of the town. I had wandered in that direction once and had seen their peculiar old-fashioned houses with roofed balconies.

"Dolores", I said, sucking on the candy. "Nice name." She smiled. Then I said, "Don't you want to know my name?" "But I've seen it on your letters!" she replied. I laughed, seeing how stupid I'd been. "Dolores", I said again, turning the candy in my mouth. "Beautiful—but Christian names don't mean anything, do they? Names like John and Mary." "My name

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has a meaning though", she said, and seeing the question on my face added, "Dolores means 'sad'."

"Sad!" I almost shouted. "Good God, how could your parents give you such a name? And you're always so cheerful and happy." "Oh well, we have names like that", she said. "But tell me about *your* name. In your case every name has a meaning, I know. And you have so many names with different meanings."

"My name means 'one who lives in happiness and luxury'", I told her. "Oh, that's wonderful", she said. "Mr Happiness-and-Luxury!" I exclaimed with a tinge of bitterness in my voice. "To tell the truth, my name is a more accurate reflection of my parents' naive optimism than of reality. My life—but enough of that." She didn't say anything, but I thought I saw a certain understanding in her eyes. Then I laughed loudly and said, "You see, both our names mean precisely the opposite of what they ought to!"

I spoke to her a number of times after that. When she was busy at her table, at least she'd smile and wave. I didn't want to disturb her every day, so I only went to the post office on alternate days. I was restless on the days I didn't go. I didn't have much work at the office. Once in a while I entered deliveries in a huge register; the rest of the time I just sat around. I didn't talk much with anyone at the office.

One day when I knocked on the box Dolores got up from her table and came to me. "Here", she said. "I had a letter for you just now." She stretched her hand into the box; instead of taking the letter, I clasped her hand. I held it, warm and soft. "Don't be silly—" she said, but made no effort to withdraw her hand. To be sure, it was rather ridiculous holding hands with our arms upraised, standing on either side of the rows of boxes. Then I heard someone entering the hall behind me and let her hand go. I left without saying a word.

DOLORES HANDED ME A LETTER through the box personally on another occasion. "Joseph George must be a close friend of yours", she said. I was startled for a moment, then said, "Yes, we were classmates." She looked pleased that my friend was a Christian, but I went away with an uneasy feeling. On the one hand, I was pleased that she took enough interest in me to notice who wrote to me; on the other, I was worried by the thought that this might possibly jeopardise my mission.

I corresponded regularly with Joseph George, responding with long, winding letters to the equally lengthy ones that I received. Matters of substance can be adroitly inserted in a long drawn-out letter; they might be conspicuous in a short one. It was fair to assume that the censors didn't spend much time over a meandering letter, especially when it appeared to be casual and personal. Hence J.G. and I always incorporated a great deal of fictitious matter into our correspondence. J.G. sometimes invented quite absorbing stories, and I in turn tried to match him in imaginative flights. Returning from work, I spent long hours at my desk composing letters.

I had hinted that my mission in this town was not likely to prove difficult. The policeman at the entrance to the post office didn't check people very conscientiously, and even allowed them to pass completely unchecked on many occasions. It would be no problem to smuggle in something in a carton of tea or biscuits. I had placed the brown paper package that I brought along when I came here at the bottom of my trunk. It was just the right size for my post office box. Once I had it past the guard, the rest would be easy. I would leave it in the box in the evening; Dolores left at five, and no one was there after that. There'd be no chance of anyone observing the package from inside the hall.

I had indicated my readiness to carry out my task at any time, but Joseph George counselled patience. He pointed out that a number of things had to be considered before choosing a date. It was essential to coordinate the activities in different cities with care, for the entire plan would be in jeopardy if the mission in one town were executed prematurely. I confess I was eager to finish the job; the package at the bottom of the trunk weighed on my mind. On the other hand, I was also grateful for each passing day, for I knew that once I had left the package in my box I'd never see Dolores again.

Watching or talking to Dolores, I was always aware that her face would one day disappear for ever from my sight. Once I asked her, "Could I see you after work this evening?" She smiled as usual and said, "No, I'm sorry, but our friendship should stay right here." I never asked her again. I knew I'd see her only behind an iron wall of boxes. It occurred to me that I

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had never really had a good look at her. When she was at her table I could see her entire figure, but only from a distance; when she talked to me at the box, I saw just her face, and that too imperfectly, her chin out of sight when her forehead was visible, and vice versa. The inescapable rectangle of the box gave me the choice between seeing her fully from a distance, or seeing a close-up of her face alone.

DOLORES HAD TOLD ME that the censors' office was located behind her. Incoming mail was censored there, while outgoing mail was handled in another part of the building. I had noted that aerogrammes often appeared to make it through unopened, while envelopes were almost always investigated, and large packets invariably.

I had seen the balding man with bushy eyebrows a number of times with Dolores. Lately he seemed to have got into the habit of gossiping with her. He'd be standing near her—quite close at times—or leaning against her table, with his back to me. Once I saw them drinking coffee (Dolores didn't drink tea).

I worked from eight to two; sometimes I went home for lunch first and then to the post office, at other times I went there straight from the office. Not many people came in to check their boxes in the afternoon, which gave me a better chance to watch or talk to Dolores. As winter approached the afternoons became pleasant. Enjoying the warm sunshine one day, I walked from the factory to the post office. I opened my box and peered in. Her chair turned away, Dolores sat almost with her back to me, and the balding man leaned against her table; they were laughing. As I watched the man threw back his head in laughter and pressed Dolores's shoulder. His hand lingered on her neck for a moment and then slipped over her breast. Dolores got up immediately, saying something. The man moved from the table too and, patting her gently on the cheek, went inside. Arranging her hair, Dolores was about to turn round when I shut my box. I went out and walked briskly home. On the way I bumped into someone so hard that I nearly knocked him over.

I came home and threw myself on the bed. I lay for over two hours with my eyes open. I didn't eat. Then it was evening. I got out of bed and made myself a strong cup of tea. I didn't feel like staying in my room. A half-finished letter was lying on my desk, but I was in no mood to continue it. I went out.

I thought I'd go to the movies. I'd been to a six-thirty show twice before; it was usually crowded, and everyone ignored the "No Smoking" sign. The smoke and the noise annoyed me, and now I thought the nine-thirty show might be more pleasant, since it wouldn't be as crowded. I decided to wander about in the meantime. Passing through the goldsmiths' lane, I stopped and stared blankly at the glittering showcases. A few Russians were also scrutinising the jewellery in the company of their pale, plump wives. The Russians are always hanging around the goldsmiths' shops.

I washed down a sandwich with a Pepsi and went to a picture. It didn't appear to be a popular film; the theatre was practically empty. When the title flashed on the screen, I saw that it was a gangster film. Soon after the picture started, I heard a noise at my feet. The audience at the earlier show had scattered empty packages of chips and husks of dried watermelon seeds on the floor and now, since most rows were more or less vacant, rats had come out to nibble at the crumbs. They scampered away when I tapped my foot, but were back in a few moments. Once I felt a soft, furry touch on my left foot; after that I put my feet up on the seat in front of me. The picture was dull, and I hardly watched it. I would've left, but since the incident at the House of Culture no one was allowed to leave an auditorium in the middle of a show, for fear that they might slip away in the darkness and leave a bomb behind. I was forced to sit through the entire show.

That night I dreamed I sat alone in a theatre, while someone resembling the balding man in the post office raped Dolores on the screen. Rats came and began biting my feet in the dark. I ran through the empty rows, with rats scurrying after me. Stumbling past vacant seats, I raced back and forth on bleeding feet, but couldn't get out of the theatre. None of the doors would open, though I pounded on each in turn. The theatre resounded with strident music.

ONE DAY I NOTICED that the familiar picture of the President, which hung in every shop and office in the city, was being

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replaced. The stern-faced figure in military dress, bedecked with ribbons and medals, had reappeared in a white silk suit and a broad smile. Entering the post office a few days later, I saw a notice posted on the door: "For your security this section will henceforth close at 8 p.m." The main hall in the post office is open until late at night for telegraph service; the section with the post office boxes used to close at midnight. The change in closing time didn't seriously effect me; I could easily carry out my task between six and eight in the evening. Nevertheless, the next day I wrote to Joseph George: "Auntie had twelve eggs to hatch, the hen has broken four; now there are only eight. If they do not hatch soon, they will all be gone."

My correspondence with Joseph George was becoming increasingly labyrinthine. To give each letter an innocent look J.G. filled them with more and more irrelevant detail, and with fictitious characters and situations that had begun to assume a reality of their own. I often felt that J.G. was getting carried away by his imaginative impulse, and elaborating stories needlessly. I admit that I found his letters more absorbing now, but I was often at a loss to separate the true substance from mere fabrication. I spent a great deal of time pursuing different interpretations of each letter. My own letters may well have acquired a similar character, for I had the impression that J.G. often missed my point. Our correspondence seemed to have lost its essential linkage, and I felt as though I were groping in the mist. Fearing that a misunderstanding might wreck everything, I hoped my mission would soon be concluded.

I continued to see Dolores as before. I gave her a silver letter-opener for Christmas. "You can use it for censoring my mail", I said in jest. One day she said, "You have circles under your eyes. What's bothering you?" "I have a lot of work at the office these days", I said. It suddenly occurred to me as I was leaving that she'd only seen my eyes, nose, and mouth, and touched my right hand. She doesn't know whether I'm fat or skinny; for all she knows I could be missing a leg.

I didn't speak much to Dolores last month. I merely looked at her, and stood watching her when she didn't see me. At home, writing letters at my desk, I often sat without putting anything on paper, her image hovering before my eyes. I'd ask her to come closer. Then I stretched my arm as far inside the box as I could and touched her, caressing her hair, her cheeks, her neck. Thrusting my fingers inside her dress I made an effort to hold one of her breasts. But I couldn't get my arm far enough inside the box, my elbow kept bumping against the side of it, and I couldn't move my hand the way I wanted. I struggled uselessly with straining fingers. And it was quite impossible for me to reach below her waist, though there were things I wanted to do to her. I wanted to put my hand between her legs and seize her hair. I conjured up countless visions, but the wall of boxes always appeared before me. All my dreams were futile in the face of that wall. At times I was filled with rage and wanted to smash the rows of boxes to pieces.

So many images of Dolores were crowding before my eyes that they began to seem real to me. I often woke from a reverie only to discover that it had all been in my mind. My visions were becoming so confused with reality that I sometimes wondered if I'd really ever seen the balding man caressing Dolores, or if I had in fact held her hand. But I didn't allow such doubts to run away with me.

Talking to Dolores two weeks ago I thought she looked at me strangely, as though there were something on her mind. I was troubled by the thought that the censors might have become interested in my correspondence and that she had learned about it. I received two letters from Joseph George after that, neither of which made much sense to me. I began to wonder if, instead of working out a brilliantly conceived plan, we had simply been engaged in a trivial exchange all this time.

CURFEW WAS SUDDENLY DECLARED all over town just two days ago. I was perplexed, not having the least idea why this had happened. As far as I could see there had been no signs of unrest or rioting. That the town should be put under curfew when things appeared to be normal was extremely suspicious. Haunted by apprehensions, I was almost convinced that the government had got wind of a far-ranging plot and had taken measures to thwart it, including seizing the suspects.

The curfew is lifted for two hours each evening, so that people can hastily buy their necessities. I made a quick trip to the post office

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yesterday as well as the day before. Since the curfew is not lifted until five, I had no hope of seeing Dolores. I wasn't even sure if she had come to work in the first place. Staffing continues for essential services, but I don't know if her work falls into that category. The pile of mail that I saw on her table the day before yesterday was there yesterday too, and in fact seemed to have grown larger; she probably hadn't come in.

I've been confined to my room for two days, and am becoming increasingly troubled. The streets are quiet, except for the occasional sound of a passing jeep or truck. I find myself missing Dolores. Her face looms before my eyes, outlined by the rectangular box as by a picture-frame. She merely looks at me. Once or twice I thought I saw tears streaming down her cheeks. I wanted to tell her not to cry. Sad Dolores. I must see her, talk to her.

I've debated with myself if I should take the brown paper bag to the post office before it's too late. But what about Joseph George? Perhaps some critical message from him waits in the pile of mail on Dolores's table. I don't know what to do.

Today is the third day of the curfew: images have been rising and fading into one another in my mind. I see the ruined post office with Dolores's face emerging from the wreckage, or her face forms first and then disappears in an explosion. In addition, since yesterday I've been hearing footsteps. Heavy boots climb the stairs, the footsteps grow louder and cease before my door. I listen tensely for a knock which doesn't come. It has happened several times in the last twenty-four hours. This morning I saw that my hands were shaking. At breakfast the cup of tea rattled in my hand; just then I heard the sound of steps climbing the stairs. The tea continued to slosh about as my grip on the cup tightened. The steps halted before my door. A few seconds passed, and then the cup in my hand clattered to the floor. Now it's noon. From time to time I'm seized by a wild desire to open my door, rush down the stairs, and dash through the deserted streets as far as I can. But then, as one might either concede the truth or delude oneself utterly in a moment of helplessness, I persuade myself that the thought of being tracked down is absurd, for I've never joined a plot, have seldom received any mail, and have nothing of consequence in the brown paper bag at the bottom of my trunk. As I spent my life in the south making few friends and shunning relatives, I'm living now in the north, stuck with a dull job and caught up in confused dreams of love or freedom, like hundreds of other people.

Translated from the Marathi by the author and Breon Mitchell

Parnassus

Thank you for letting us see your poems unhappily
Don't like them quite enough please try again
Thank you for sending more poems we didn't feel
Any quite strong enough not more than six
Though quite liked "Newry" thanks for your letter
Your poems seem to have got mislaid sorry
About this an administrative slip
send us some more
Sometime at the moment we are unable to accept any further
Manuscripts dear subscriber sorry to be
Returning these we found them intriguing but
Not quite fully-achieved the Editor regrets
A poem trying to get out somewhere but only
In "Lunar Shot" insufficiently vital
Semantics derealised the Editor thanks you submit

Glen Cavaliero

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Raymond Aron

From Yankee Imperialism to Russian Hegemony?

Turning-Points in World Politics

THIRTY YEARS AGO, the Professor of International Relations and the Man-in-the-Street saw the world in much the same way. The former used academic terms such as "bipolar" to describe the system of interstate relations; the latter focused on the rivalry between the USA and the USSR, although he was likely to overestimate the overall military and economic superiority of the American maritime power over the Eurasian land power—a superiority comparable with Great Britain's over Europe in former times. Only 20 years ago, in 1958 (when Nikita Khrushchev issued his "ultimatum" on Berlin) and in 1962 (at the time of the Cuban missile crisis), a terrified mankind held its breath.

Today the Professor and the Man-in-the-Street may still agree, but not about a version of the world. Instead they would both argue that its complexity has made the world impossible to grasp. Must the Moscow-Washington duel now be replaced by the Moscow-Peking-Washington triangle? Which of the duellists now has military supremacy? Does the "East-West" conflict still have the *global* significance we used to ascribe to it until the early 1960s?

Certainly the USA and the USSR still merit the special position which they themselves assume and which observers allow them: the only states possessing a complete array of weapons on land, sea, and air, from sub-machine gun to megaton bomb—the only states capable of bringing their armed strength to bear at any point on the planet—the only ones who have taken part in the conquest of space. More than that, from now until the end of this century they will essentially keep hold of this duopoly, no matter how great the progress of Communist China over the next decades.

So it is that a blurred image of the world has replaced the Cold War's rather oversimplified picture. Sticking to the essentials, it seems to me that the main reasons for the change are as follows:

1. THE CONFUSION between the Soviet Union and Marxism-Leninism which transfigured a great-power rivalry into a war of ideology now belongs to the past. The so-called "socialist camp" has splintered apart. Communist China denounces Soviet "hegemonism" as Enemy Number One. Once Moscow had faded, the intelligentsia used to be able to visualise a true Mecca in Belgrade or in Havana—Tito or Fidel Castro *vs.* the Stalinist (or capitalist) Goliath. Between the quasi-Stalinism of North Viet Nam and the quasi-genocidal terrorism of Kampuchea, what is there to choose? China supports Phnom Penh because Moscow supports Hanoi. When Communist parties come to power they rekindle their old nations' historic quarrels.

It would be too simple to eliminate the ideological dimension and just hark back to the diplomatic chessboard. In Asia the two empires, Russian and Chinese, have built up the same ideology into official state truth, and mutually accuse one another of betraying the true truth. By so doing they strip their manoeuvres, alliances, and hostilities of any ideological cover. Power politics emerges, pure and simple, from the language which used to camouflage it and which is now employed only in "unmasking."

Elsewhere it is quite a different story. The victory of some Progressive or Marxist-Leninist party does not necessarily involve the country going over to the Soviet camp, although often it does. Even when it does not, the régime that styles itself and intends to

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be "socialist" pursues a different kind of diplomacy from the moderate or pro-Western régime which it has overthrown. The Communist party's accession to power in Rome or Paris would constitute an international event with unforeseeable consequences (any extreme interpretation—catastrophe? or short-lived episode?—might be intellectually convenient, but unrealistic).

2. THE SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP itself has become ambiguous and equivocal. Is it coming nearer to "condominium" or to *la lutte à mort*? Are the Big Two winding their quarrel down, or are they concealing it? In the last analysis the SALT agreements are based on mutual distrust. Dr Henry Kissinger hoped to conclude partial agreements with Moscow which could constitute a network to contain the revolutionary (or ex-revolutionary) power.

Did he succeed or fail? Has Brezhnev's Russia become what George Kennan claims, a *conservative* power from which the US or allied Western Europe no longer has much to fear? Or else, as the dissidents assert, is it still *the same*—cautious but always ready to seize opportunities to extend its sphere of influence or domination—more ambitious than in Stalin's time because it possesses the means—and more normal, domestically, because the gerontocrats who have survived so many seismic shocks have "routinised" their despotic rule?

Containment used to be the slogan or inspiration of the US bipartisan policy. That policy no longer exists. On every topic—the "China card", SALT agreements, Africa, military spending—the Eastern intellectuals who, whether Republicans or Democrats, devised and supported America's post-War bipartisan diplomacy are today divided, sometimes to the point where old friends and colleagues are no longer on speaking terms.

3. THE TWO BIG POWERS have not lost their military supremacy, but what are they doing with it? What *can* they do with it? When a force does not act, is it a force at all? In 1950–53 the USA did not gain a victory over North Korea, half of a country, which was saved by the intervention of "volunteers" (i.e., Chinese regular troops). They were defeated by North Viet Nam, another half-country turned state, defeated in the sense that North Viet Nam achieved its goal without having actually beaten the US expeditionary force. Did the Soviet Union need the 40,000 tanks in its Armoury to crush the Hungarian uprising? Or to bring to heel those heretical Marxist-Leninists who dreamed in Prague of a "socialism with a human face"?

The old-fashioned diplomats, if somewhat less cynical than Stalin ("How many divisions has the Pope?"), never overlooked in their negotiations and calculations the number of armed men standing behind each ambassador. Today the number of new-fashioned experts and advisers—culture, science, trade, information—symbolises total diplomacy, and illustrates diplomacy's new dimensions.

SO A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION arises. *4.* What is emerging as the essence of the relations between states? On the one hand, there is the accumulation of arms, and technical progress in nuclear or non-nuclear weapons; on the other, national economies involved in a world market. For the first time, as some historians have pointed out, there is a World Market in existence which does not operate within the bounds of a World Empire. European industry depends on the oil that comes from the Persian Gulf. National or multi-national enterprises get various parts essential for their own machines from countries with low wages. European relations among Common Market partners, with the oil-producing countries, with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, are concerned first of all with trade, and secondarily with intellectual or cultural exchanges. The socialist states do not fully belong to the empire of commerce; but they are attached to it by their resort to international banking for private loans in order to finance their purchases in the West.

As much as (or more than) the traditional diplomatic-strategic relations among states, it is the complex body of inter- and trans-national relations that constitutes so to speak a "world society." Ideas and information cross frontiers and go right round the planet in a matter of minutes; technical innovations and scientific discoveries are spreading with increasing speed. In this trans-national society, old nation-state forms no longer always play the leading part.

THIS EXPLAINS the diversity of the images among which our Professors of International Relations are hesitant to choose. Which of them comes closest to present-day reality? I do not propose to discuss, in the abstract, the respective merits of these accounts, which may be more complementary than incompatible. I shall take as a starting point the distinction between the *Inter-State System*, which is

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governed by relations of power, and the *World Society* over which no single force reigns supreme; and I shall ask questions about the position of the US and the USSR in each of these. Does the relative decline of the US mark the transfer from "American imperialism" to "Soviet hegemonism"?

Arms & Diplomacy

RUSSO-AMERICAN RIVALRY has taken two quite different forms in Europe and in the rest of the world. Here, from 1947 to 1955, on either side of the line of demarcation, the two coalitions of the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty gradually took shape. The frontiers did not change, and neither camp had recourse to arms to alter them. In Asia and the Near East the two big powers acted in the wings, if not on stage, but their troops never clashed directly on a field of battle.

The two limited wars in which the USA committed an expeditionary force both had an accidental character. Stalin would probably not have given Kim Il Sung the green light if the Washington diplomats had made it quite clear beforehand that they would not tolerate the invasion of South Korea by troops from the North. Hostilities would not have dragged on for three years if Harry Truman had taken notice of the Chinese warnings passed on to him by the Indian ambassador. Likewise, the Americans, who were hostile to renewal of the French presence in Indochina, changed their tune following Mao Tse-tung's victory in China. After the Geneva Conference they were not bound to perpetuate a "Korean" situation in Viet Nam in so much more unfavourable conditions: the South Vietnamese army, unlike South Korea's, did not match the troops mobilised by the other half of the country.

These two campaigns apart, the Inter-state System has changed as a consequence of De-colonisation, uprisings in various countries, and shifts of allegiance from one camp to another. The USA and the USSR would intervene in politics inside and between states, but under some juridical and usually impeccable guise. The United Nations pact does not forbid a state to buy arms abroad or to ask another state for aid. The USA and the USSR both respond to these kinds of request, and proceed to withdraw their advisers and their troops when the established government requires it. President Sadat got Soviet advisers to withdraw. Ethiopia's revolutionary régime too has got rid of surplus American diplomats or military technicians.

SOMETIMES THE LEGAL VENEER does not quite stand up to examination. The Anglo-French expedition of 1956 in retaliation against nationalisation of the Suez Canal failed for a number of reasons. It would only have succeeded could it have brought about the fall of Nasser and the immediate installation of another leader. Encouraged by the Soviet ambassador and the line taken by the USA, Nasser hung on. The British pound could not take the financial strain, and the Anglo-French forces beat an inglorious retreat. At the same moment Soviet troops put down the Hungarian Uprising, at the formal behest of a "peasant-worker government" led by Janos Kadar. The juridical camouflage was no less flimsy than the Anglo-French cover of occupying the Canal Zone in order to separate the Israeli and Egyptian belligerents. In 1968 the Kremlin improved somewhat the strategy of troop movements by involving its allies in the Warsaw Pact. Apart from the crises of 1956 and 1968, the big powers intervened in other states' domestic affairs without expressly violating international law. Such intervention might be open—dispatch of arms or advisers—or clandestine—destabilisation of a régime by giving support to internal oppositions or recalcitrant ethnic minorities. In this sense it can be said that the old "gunboat diplomacy" finally went out of fashion.

In the Near East, Israel and the Arab countries have fought four wars, in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 (leaving out the 1970 war of attrition), which were ended by cease-fires, never by a peace treaty. In 1956 France and Great Britain took part in the operations; since that time they have been eliminated from negotiations in times of crisis, not because of their role in 1956 but for a much simpler reason. When states are at war, only those states which are capable of putting forces into the theatre of operations can gain a hearing. In 1956, 1967, and 1973 Russo-American negotiations backstage in the Security Council and the General Assembly of the UN influenced the duration of the hostilities and the form of the cease-fire. The Russians and the Americans abstained from direct participation in these conflicts—which enabled the Israelis to win victories on the ground—but in 1973 they kept their respective protégés resupplied (first the Russians, then the Americans). And they hastened the cease-fire in order to rescue an Egyptian army disastrously surrounded in the desert.

In a similar crisis, when the Kremlin seemed to be on the point of flying airborne divisions into the Near East, what balance of forces decided the outcome of the political test of will? That of the forces available

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in the theatre—namely, the US Sixth Fleet, the Soviet fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean, the land-based air squadrons? Or was it the balance of overall forces, Russian and American, nuclear and conventional, throughout the planet? I do not think that anybody—Richard Nixon, not even Henry Kissinger—can answer with certainty. The Kremlin leadership had no wish to risk committing its own troops against the Israelis. Yet it would not tolerate a total victory for the Israelis. For his own part, Dr Kissinger wanted to spare Egypt a defeat which would have prevented Sadat from pursuing a policy of peace. Once given that there was no prospect of an Egyptian-Syrian victory, the Russians and Americans both wanted basically the same thing. Each had made its calculation of the world or regional balance of forces; each avoided confrontation, and accepted the verdict of arms (other than their own).

WHETHER IN THE CASE OF Ethiopia, South Yemen, or Afghanistan, Mozambique or Angola, have Soviet advances been linked in some way with the respective number of nuclear warheads in the missiles in the silos or in Russian and American submarines? Or with the number of tanks or fighter aircraft squadrons on each side of the European demarcation line?

To all appearances the answer speaks for itself. The movement for "liberation" in Mozambique identified itself with Marxist or "progressive" ideas. It was not in Moscow but in our very own European universities that Africa's liberators have learned their ideology. In Angola a "progressive" movement won the day because the US Congress refused to vote the funds necessary to back the "non-progressive" liberation movement. The balance of forces between the various parties inside Ethiopia and Angola depended *not* on the balance of world forces between the USSR and the US *but on the capacity or the respective will of Westerners and Soviets to help their own side.*

The apparent separation between the relation of local forces and that of the overall strength of the big powers is never a radical one. The interventions of Cuban troops in Africa presupposed in the Soviet camp an air-transport force, a chain of air bases, and possibly even airborne divisions in case of need. In the Near East the Kremlin tolerated the Israeli victory of 1967, and hesitated to put its airborne divisions into action in 1973, because of the power of the United States just as much as for reasons of local circumstances. In the Cuba crisis in the autumn of 1962 all the advantages lay on the American side. Locally, the US Army, Air Force and Navy enjoyed a crushing superiority. Similarly, their strategic nuclear armament was three or four times stronger than the Soviet Union's. Yet how can we ever identify the respective roles played in the resolution of the crisis by the conventional weaponry in the theatre of operations and by nuclear weapons?

It is better to keep to cautious conclusions. The central "balance of terror"—the one which embraces both Europe and the two Super-powers' strategic arms—exerts an influence on crises, diplomatic confrontations, and their outcome when armies are face-to-face or when recourse to arms by the big powers appears probable or at least plausible. On the other hand, where Russo-American rivalry is played out within a given state, the balance of overall forces has only a very indirect influence on the protagonists. Nothing succeeds like success: if the East Wind seems to be outblowing the West Wind, the arguments of Left Progressivism become that much more convincing. And now the relation of overall forces between the USA and the USSR is altering year by year in favour of the latter.

Arms Control

THE SOVIET UNION has always maintained very sizeable forces under arms. It is enough to compare, for example, the number of tanks on the Soviet and the American side—50,000 against 10,000—to give the impression that Moscow now has "the upper hand" over Washington. It is easy to take the figures further: the Soviet Union's military budget shows a 3–5% annual increase. It represents some 13%, possibly even 15%, of the national product of the USSR—*three times* the percentage of the US (at 5%). Even in the field of nuclear weapons it is the Russians who have made greater progress, deploying two new systems of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and three land-based systems. The Americans have deployed only one new SLBM system, the Trident, have *"MIRVed"*[1] their Minuteman and Poseidon missiles, and improved the accuracy of their nuclear warheads. Over the last ten years the negotiations on strategic arms limitation agreements (SALT 1 and SALT 2) have accompanied and cloaked the Soviet rise.

The SALT agreements take their inspiration from

[1] Multiple warheads, independently guided, inside one missile.

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the doctrine of "Arms Control", whose central idea may be expressed as follows: to establish an armaments ratio such that neither of the opponents should be tempted to use them. "Arms control" does not require disarmament or reduction of armaments to some minimum. If each of the Super powers had only a hundred missiles, it would be at risk of being disarmed by a first strike, and hence there would be greater instability.

The Americans have concentrated on the so-called "strategic" weapons, in other words those capable of reaching Soviet territory from US territory or from submarines (or vice versa). The tendency of the SALT agreements is to create a kind of "stability", not between the Super-powers' military capabilities as a whole but within one category of nuclear weapons, the Intercontinental Missiles. Now in so far as these agreements do achieve their aim they as good as "neutralise" these weapons. "Stability" entails the non-utilisation of these weapons, except in the event of a direct attack on them or on the national territory. What remains, then, of their old "deterrent" function?

The very principle of the SALT agreements cannot fail to inject even greater urgency into the question which Europeans have been raising for 20 years: is European security guaranteed by the conventional forces of NATO or by the thermo-nuclear arsenal of the United States?

At the start of NATO the presence of American troops in Europe symbolically obliterated the distance between the Old World and the New ("*Ich bin ein Berliner*"). An agreement restricted to *strategic arms* opens a gulf between Western Europe and the US. The long-drawn-out controversy between the US and USSR on the "Backfire bomber" highlights both the logic and the paradox of these negotiations. If these have as their objective the equality or equivalence of one isolated sector—the long-distance missiles—the Americans are quite logically opposed to the "Backfire" having an international function or capability. But, used in the theatre of operations, this bomber makes a substantial contribution to the strength of the Soviet camp while adding very little to the intercontinental missile arsenal. "Logic" in an agreement limited to one type of weapons—but "illogic" in an agreement including all armaments.

Between the moment when the "Arms Control" doctrine was worked out and the conclusion of the SALT 2 talks, technical progress has simply outstripped diplomacy.

DR ALBERT WOHLSTETTER'S famous article, "The Delicate Balance of Terror", has now assumed a new immediacy. With the greater number of warheads resulting from the insertion of several warheads into each missile, added to improvements in accuracy, it is now possible to envisage one side being able to destroy nearly all the other side's land-based missiles with its first strike. This would leave the side under attack no choice except to reply with its submarine-based missiles, albeit with the certainty of suffering a similar fate. After the first strike on the other's land-based missiles, the attacker has thousands of nuclear warheads in hand for a third strike.

In the hypothesis of an equality (or equivalence) of destructive capability between the Big Two, only a second-strike capacity remains credible. Now it may be that one (or both) of the Big Two possesses a first-strike capability against land-based missiles. In that case one side would force the other either to *negotiate* after the loss of most of its land-based missiles, or to *retaliate* against cities at the risk of escalation into a suicidal orgy of violence. The host of European and American objections against SALT 2 reveal the dead-end which is reached by negotiations confined to intercontinental missiles. It is argued that the agreement does *not* "stabilise" the intercontinental weapons relationship by separating the European theatre from the nuclear arsenals of the Big Two.

Worse still, the Americans are discovering that owing to over-confidence in their own technological resources they have allowed themselves to be either

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caught or overtaken in some respects. As leaders in the field of "miniaturisation" they equipped the Minuteman III with three nuclear warheads (of 170 kilotons). The less skilful Russians put their money on heavier missiles with a load capacity far greater than any of the US missiles. In the *SS-18* the Russians load eight warheads of two megatons each. From now until 1985 the 303 "*MIRVed*" *SS-18s* are considered quite capable of destroying the land-based missile silos.

A FEW YEARS FROM NOW, with or without ratification of the SALT 2 agreements, the experts may possibly be reckoning that at the higher level of intercontinental missiles the Soviet Union has achieved a certain "superiority." (Superiority means one side having the better chance of wiping out all the other side's land-based missiles with a single strike.) All polemics aside, one must observe that the application of "Arms Control" has furthered neither disarmament nor the stability of the level of intercontinental weaponry—nor the security of Europe. This setback is due partly to the doctrine itself (the isolation of one category of armaments), and partly to technical innovations (MIRV, improved accuracy). The technicians have been making stability impossible while the diplomats persisted with the search for it. Soviet inferiority (in miniaturisation) has tipped over into the superiority of their heavy missiles' load-bearing capacity. The optimists have been rejoicing in "Mutual Assured Destruction" (MAD) unaware that all the time the "deterrent" threat of nuclear armaments was becoming less and less plausible.

A GREAT MANY EUROPEANS will interpret the US doctrine in terms of a desire to spare American national territory the ravages of nuclear warfare, come what may. In a sense the neutralisation of strategic forces might well keep the American and Russian home territories out of the possible theatre of operations.

I am not convinced by this interpretation. By maintaining two to three hundred thousand of their troops in the middle of Europe the Americans doom themselves to an unprecedented disaster if they do not manage to prevent the invasion of Western Europe by Soviet troops through every means available. Two ideas appear to guide the thinking and actions of the Washington leadership and its advisers: *(1)* the Russo-American rivalry is written in the great book of history, but it can assume more or less violent forms, and proceed at a higher or lower level of intensity; *(2)* the common interest of the Big Two powers and of all humanity is never to embark on an "unthinkable" war.

These are reasonable and attractive ideas, but they do leave room for doubt. The course of diplomacy—crises and their resolution—is affected by the arms available on either side. What will be the influence of the outcome of the SALT talks on possible confrontations between the Big Two? In the foreseeable state of the nuclear balance in 1982 or 1985, would a confrontation of the same type as the Cuba crisis of 1962 or the Yom Kippur war of 1973 be likely to end in the same way?

Enter China

DOES THE DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY of Mao Tse-tung's successors modify the structure of the Inter-State System? Even before the death of "the Great Helmsman" the tension between Moscow and Peking had forced the Kremlin to concentrate 44 divisions and a quarter of its tactical Air Force along the Chinese borders. The resources necessary to maintain a large army, with its bases and equipment, in the Far East reduce the resources available in the West by the same amount. Whatever the relations between the USA or the countries of Western Europe with People's China, that country's hostility to the Soviet Union renders the West a service. In the language of Marxism-Leninism one can speak of "an objective alliance." *Objectively*, the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

What changed in 1978 was the opening of China to the outside world and the line of the "Four Modernisations" (agriculture, industry, the army and technology). Teng Hsiao-ping is replacing the reign of ideology with that of efficiency (though not without quoting the occasional Maoist snippet which appears to coincide with his present policy). By the same token he has not hesitated to borrow Western machinery (and the dollars to buy it). That "objective alliance" takes on a new face once Western finance and know-how is assisting the modernisation—and, therefore, the economic and military reinforcement—of People's China.

Just how far does the West's interest in reinforcing China extend? Not a few Europeans and Americans have been speculating on the possible conflict between the short and the long term. What will be Marxist China's line the day after tomorrow? The leader of the "all-out modernisation" faction,

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Teng Hsiao-ping, is over seventy. Would a powerful modernised China pursue a policy in key with the material or political interests of the United States or of all the Western world?

Doubts and objections proliferate. But what is in question today is the response to the advances of People's China. We grant the Soviet Union financial credits, and sell the Russians complete factory installations—why not the same facilities for China? The Soviet Union does not happen to buy either arms or atomic power stations from us; whereas People's China is eager to buy both. The Americans have decided not to sell arms to Peking; but they have already made it known that they would not oppose a contrary decision on the part of the Europeans.

The Russians certainly frown on this Chinese-Western *rapprochement*. On our side, we should have no illusions about the military scope of this "objective alliance." If the Soviet Union were to launch a limited operation at one of the hot spots on the Russo-Chinese border, the United States would have neither the desire nor the means to intervene. Similarly, supposing that the Soviet Union were to move its army toward the Atlantic, China would not be springing to our assistance. China does not constitute for Western Europe the rearward ally that Russia was for France at the start of this century.

The men in the Kremlin would probably see a mortal danger in the alliance between Japan and People's China, and the parallel modernisation of China with help from the West. But this is a medium- or long-term issue. With its present equipment the Chinese Army is some 20 years behind the Russians, and Japan spends only about 1% of its GNP on its defence forces. All in all, I doubt whether by playing the "China card" the Americans are likely to make Moscow any more flexible or willing to make concessions—the opposite seems to me more likely. The Vietnamese were determined to liquidate the Pol Pot régime at all costs—the Russians were not exactly vexed, to say the least, that this liquidation should have occurred so soon after the recognition of People's China by Washington.

THE CHINESE are right to denounce what they call "Soviet hegemonism" as Enemy Number One. From their point of view it is quite obvious. They have no common frontier with the USA—and a frontier of some 2,000 kilometres with the Soviet Empire in Asia. The formula is also true for a large part of the world. In Europe the Soviet Union maintains a superiority of both troops and equipment, not to mention nuclear superiority (the *SS-20*, which is mobile and "MIRVed"). More than the USA, the USSR is now bent on dispatching its forces wherever the opportunity occurs; and for its various expeditions it has more means of its own (a dozen airborne divisions) and more available from its allies (Cuba and East Germany).

The Soviet leadership would certainly disagree with those US academics in Washington who have been arguing that "military strength is playing a declining role in international relations. . . ." In the Inter-state system you must count divisions (or missiles) and the will to use them. In that respect "Soviet hegemonism" is taking over from "Yankee imperialism."

The World Market

IN THE POST-WAR ERA the United States dominated the World Market even more than the Inter-state system. The North Korean army, subsequently backed by Chinese volunteers, stood firm against an American expeditionary force and showed up the limits of US military power in land operations. The days of European colonisation were over. Nations other than Japan had acquired the means and organisation necessary for the modern art of warfare. As for the nuclear arm which was Washington's monopoly, it frightened neither Moscow nor Peking. The Washington leadership had both moral and political difficulties which served to dissuade them from using atomic weapons, even against "Communist aggressors."

In the World Market the Americans as good as reigned alone. At the financial, commercial, and industrial centre of the so-called free world they devoted available surplus capital to foreign investment; they were at the forefront of most of the new fields of technical development; 6% of the earth's total population consumed 50% of the raw materials used by the whole of mankind. It was an abnormal situation which could not last (and it favoured the creation of international organisations such as the IMF, GATT and the UN).

The Marshall Plan and the recovery of Western Europe and Japan met the logic of both the Inter-state system and the World Market, as these were conceived by the American leaders themselves.

Yet 30 years after the Marshall Plan, what is left of the supremacy of the United States?

Per capita production in the most advanced European countries now appears to be *greater* than

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that of the United States, using official exchange rates. Even if the "undervaluation of the dollar" falsifies these calculations, the fact remains that per capita output in Switzerland, Sweden, and the West German Federal Republic has come close to, or drawn level with, that of the United States. There remains one superiority, which is decisive for the Inter-State System: only the United States combines with high output *(1)* a massive population and *(2)* an immense land expanse. The Japanese population, half as numerous as the American, is crowded into a narrow space. Western Europe is divided into states the most numerous of which does not exceed a quarter of the US population. Japan and Western Europe are short of raw materials and energy, and they depend on external trade much more than the US. Though competing with the USA within the World Market, neither the Japanese nor the Europeans count as rivals within the Inter-state system. They remain protected states, even when the US Republic denounces the invasion of goods "*Made in Japan*."

Until 1971 the Bretton Woods régime was maintained come what may. Over-valuation of the dollar simultaneously encouraged the expansion of international trade, the growth of European exports, and foreign investment by the big American companies. Since 1971 (and especially 1973), the United States have imposed a "floating" exchange-rate system. It is in Washington that the world's monetary order is still decided, whatever negotiations may precede or camouflage the US decisions. Lastly, in certain fields—civil aviation, oil technology, computers, the conquest of space—American technology still leads the way.

DOES WASHINGTON'S monetary reign result from the role played by the United States in the Inter-state system? In the absence of gold, only the dollar can serve as a world currency. Neither the Tokyo nor the Bonn government wants the Mark or the Yen to become a reserve currency (although these two are both used to some extent as reserve currencies). The dollar is becoming less used as a unit of international account; the currency basket which is a substitute for a world currency attenuates the fluctuations of the American currency. But the central banks which receive the flood of surplus dollars choose between two evils: either they let the dollar rate fall (which they fear for economic and commercial motives), or they support the dollar rate—and are often compelled to buy billions of dollars whose inflationary effect it is hard to neutralise entirely. Until 1971 the Europeans did their utmost to maintain a fixed rate: between gold and the dollar, between the dollar and the principal currencies (not without a few revaluations of the Mark or the Yen). Since then, the Japanese and Germans have wavered between two possible attitudes: supporting the dollar, or letting it slide. At present the monetary authorities in Bonn and Washington seem to be agreed on a flexible method of defending the dollar rate.

If there were no American GIs in Berlin, would the Europeans have the means and the will to oppose Washington's economico-monetary policy? The Dollar naturally became the Pound Sterling of the 20th century. A gold standard probably demands a dominant currency. Only the American currency could perform that role; and it is performing it very poorly. Only a European currency, in the full sense of the term, could put an end to the dollar's supremacy—a supremacy which is debatable precisely to the extent that distinct monetary zones are emerging (one of them Asiatic, attached to the Yen; the other European, revolving around the Mark).

Then again, the dramatic decline of the dollar has not left US prestige undamaged—just as OPEC's victorious rebellion unmasked the myth of American omnipotence. US military strength creates the equivalent of the political framework in which old world markets came to flower in the past. The Americans encouraged the "decolonisation" which reduced their European allies to regional status. Pulling out of Viet Nam and the quadrupling of the price of oil robbed a lot of Americans of

'So Far, So Good.'

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their illusions. It also undermined among the members of the world market the superstitious respect for the will of Washington. "You know, the Americans just won't stand for . . ."—the phrase is going out of fashion. "They" will stand for and tolerate because "reprisals", whether military or economic, are proving equally ineffective. In commercial negotiations, when the Europeans and Japanese do not debate on an equal footing, that is their own responsibility; they are the victims of their own weakness or their own inferiority complexes.

The Two World Markets

MARXIST-LENINISTS speak of two world markets: one Capitalist, the other Socialist. In fact these two markets are not to be compared. The latter includes only the East European countries and Cuba, with the recent addition of Viet Nam—an allegiance imposed by the Soviet Union in order to consolidate the links between Moscow and Hanoi and so perpetuate the antagonism between Peking and Hanoi. The countries of Eastern Europe have stepped up their trade with the Western economies. The so-called "Socialist market", confined as it is to the Soviet zone of Europe, and with no convertible currencies, does not constitute a substitute or rival for the World Market centred on the United States. It is marginal in relation to the overall international economy.

The Soviet Union plays little part in aiding the developing countries; and the very countries whose

'For an Amateur, You're Got a Sharp Blade.'

régimes advertise their own "Progressive" or Marxist credentials do not divorce themselves from our World Market. It is to the advanced capitalist countries that the oil producers sell their black gold. It is into the American banking system that they channel the dollars they cannot immediately spend. Even when they have come to power thanks to Soviet assistance, the leaders of Black Africa resume diplomatic relations with the West and do not leave the capitalist market.

Where leaderships pay lip-service to "Socialism" or to Sovietism, Moscow tries hard to obtain air and naval bases—in Guinea, South Yemen, Mozambique. They work to consolidate their position through their acquired influence over the country's armed forces. In Marxist Ethiopia, Soviet officers directed the offensive against the Marxist Somalis. In the Ogaden, they fought *against the Eritrean "rebels"* (rebels previously dubbed a "liberation movement", and supported by all the Arab countries, the progressive ones foremost).

CUBAN TROOPS in Africa, flown in by the Soviet airforce, opened a new phase. The intervention was characterised by the use of military forces a long way from the Soviet Union, supplied and maintained by airlift, using bases made available by friendly countries. The Soviet technique of expansion owes everything to military strength and infiltration or to political propaganda—and almost nothing to economic relations. In Africa the United States appears as the very centre of the world market, the Soviet Union as one of the world's two great military powers.

Does Soviet expansion in Africa and the Middle East endanger the Balance of Power or the World Market? It all depends on the geopolitical location and resources of a country which moves from one allegiance to another.

An anti-Western régime in Iran—or a revolutionary putsch in Saudi Arabia—would upset both the economic order and the politico-military balance. Do the Americans still have the means and the determination to oppose such events when they belong to the "internal affairs" of sovereign states? Even in an austere nationalist régime dominated by the traditional Shiite mosque the leaders probably would not renounce the wealth of "black gold." So they sell their oil, but they are distinctly less solicitous about the world market or the interests of the consumer states; they would not underwrite the security of the Persian Gulf for the sake of the West. A change of régime in Saudi Arabia would give rise

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to even graver consequences. Would the new Arab masters follow the same policy on prices and output? The cement of the *de facto* alliance between Saudi Arabia and the USA is the Ryadh royal family's fear of revolution. The traditionalist and religious ruling family, whose ancestors unified the tribes of old Arabia, supports with its oil wealth moderate, anti-Soviet, and anti-progressive régimes. The Americans would have very little leverage on a progressive Islamic régime.

THE STABILITY of the World Market is at the mercy of leaderships hostile to modern Western civilisation and above all hostile to capitalism. In both cases the detailed workings of the world economy would be dependent on men who were alien to its spirit and logic. It is possible to imagine the revolutionaries in Teheran and Ryadh, more nationalist than progressive (and anti-Soviet because of their religion), gradually returning to the world economy after the period of disturbance, and accepting its constraints. But in this eventuality the shock suffered by the United States—even more than the defeat in Viet Nam—would echo across the five continents and force the Washington leadership into yet another agonising reappraisal.

The US military presence in Turkey or Saudi Arabia hangs upon the good will of the leaderships in Ankara and Ryadh. Of course the same goes for the military facilities granted, then withdrawn, by Egypt and Somalia to the Soviet Union. But the Soviet reverse in Egypt (their reverse in Somalia was the price of victory in Ethiopia) concerned the Interstate system, and did not affect the socialist world market. On the other hand, a split between Iran or Saudi Arabia and the United States convulses the world economy which is indispensable to America's prosperity and still more to its European allies.

Such a split would symbolise US impotence. How can the Americans conserve the allegiance of the countries most essential for safeguarding their interests? In the great game of world diplomacy, masterful American power derived largely from prestige. Washington was seen as a great power which could rule without gunboat diplomacy. In the final analysis this simple confidence was ill-founded. By its very nature, Western modernisation undermines traditional authorities, uproots the masses, and increases grievances against the men in power (and their American protectors). The Shah, a modernising despot, concentrated all the resentment of the young and the Muslim faithful upon his own head. The Americans used to be able to help their friends to take proper precautions against old-style military coups. Against a popular uprising kindled by charismatic religious leaders, neither the Iranian Army nor US advisers had any effective strategy.

THE WEAKNESS of the USA in the international economy aggravates the basic contradiction of today's world—the existence of a World Market without a World Empire. American supremacy created the appearance of an empire. Propaganda denounced "Yankee imperialism", thereby confusing two quite different phenomena—the strong influence exerted by the USA in Latin America, Europe, and Asia, and the viable economic order dubbed "imperialist." Lenin had explained the 1914 war in terms of "rivalry among the capitalist countries over the division of other continents. . . ." Once the European colonial empires had gone it was the very organisation of international trade which was dubbed "imperialist" as such (multi-national companies, the exploitation of mining resources by foreign capital, etc.).

In face of these troubles, extending from Afghanistan and Iran into the whole area, Peking has been given to hesitate. For instance it sided with the Shah against the rebels, whether lay or religious. At the point when Teng Hsiao-ping laid down the line of the "four modernisations" Peking stood out against anything which would hamper or disorganise international trade. Moreover, such threats against the world market only reinforced "Soviet hegemonism." If, through "progressive" governments, the Soviet Union controls Middle Eastern oil, it holds the European economy at its mercy and enlarges its military sway.

Seen from the outside, the Soviet attitude appears rather ambiguous. Although not belonging to the World Market, the Soviet Union does feel the repercussions of the crises that disturb it. The USSR has no wish for chaos in a country on its own frontier. Nor does it want to ignore the political opportunity provided by the subversive upsurge of religious forces. In Iran the West relied on a modernising but tyrannical régime; after the period of religious reaction, the succeeding régime will keep its distance from Washington, whether or not it sets off down (or up) the road to Moscow.

American Decline & Soviet Power

MY DISTINCTION between the international system and the world economy does not

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suffice to suggest a simple, clear-cut account of international relations at the end of the 1970s. But it does, I hope, throw light on the shift away from the American empire and towards Soviet hegemony.

Some observers see the American Republic as "in decline", and for three main reasons. *(1)* the American-inspired SALT agreements are leading to an equality or equivalence of intercontinental nuclear strength; and this may soon lead to a Soviet superiority, which on paper gives overall superiority to the USSR since it has more tanks and divisions than the USA. *(2)* The second reason is the new and continuing American inability to prevent the social and political upheavals which cause transference of allegiance on the part of certain countries vital to the World Market. *(3)* The final reason is the reduction of the American economy's margin of superiority over its commercial rivals, and the permanent dollar crisis.

In drawing closer to the United States, China is acting in accordance with the age-old logic of power politics. The Soviet Union is closer to China's vital territorial centres than the USA. Furthermore, American military power, supposing that it is applied, tends not to extend itself but to reinforce other states which are under threat. Apart from the conquest of the North American continent which was completed by the end of the last century, there exists no "American imperialism" comparable to the imperialism of Czarist or Soviet Russia. In Viet Nam, American strategy remained defensive; its aim was simply to prevent the Hanoi brand of Communism from engulfing the South. America's intervention in Viet Nam had no resemblance to imperialism in the ordinary sense of the word, namely "the conquest of lands or peoples." As for imperialism as defined by "Multi-national companies" and "foreign investment"—so far from fearing it, China welcomes it with open arms, relying on the blind passion for profit (so characteristic of capitalist enterprise) to obtain the loans, the science, and the techniques which are necessary to its own dreams of modernisation.

If the Chinese use another word to designate and warn against Russian policy—a word translated in the West as "*Hegemonism*"—they are right to do so, even though the word chosen does not exactly correspond to reality. The Soviet Union exerts its domination over Eastern Europe by military force; and it fixes the limits on the diversity tolerable among the régimes of "the socialist community." Hence People's China is afraid of being encircled by the coalition of the Soviet Union and its allies. Japan and the United States judge that military reinforcement of China contributes towards maintaining the Asiatic balance in the Inter-state system. Hence the opening of People's China to trade with the West enlarges the world market.

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT China's decision against "Soviet hegemonism" and for "American imperialism" might be repeated tomorrow in other continents? For Latin America, the Soviet Union is far away and the United States are so nearby. Apart from Cuba, one finds very few Russians there, and a lot of Americans. Similarly, in Iran there used to be and in Saudi Arabia there still are lots of Americans and not very many Russians. The Egyptians took in thousands of Russian military advisers and technicians, then dismissed them. In other countries in Africa the Russians have lost the sympathy of peoples whose leaders had "chosen socialism" (Mali, Guinea). Black students returning from the Soviet-Communist world complain of the "racism" they have suffered there. (Apparently the Cubans are having more success in Africa than the Russians.)

There remain three theatres of operations where East-West conflict continues, whether directly or indirectly—in Africa, in the Middle East, and in Europe. In Africa the Russians have dramatically altered the old rules of the game by putting in Cuban troops and their military advisers. The ultimate fate of those countries governed by "Liberation movements" or parties claiming allegiance to "Socialism" is not yet certain. For economic reasons they may

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yet revert to the West. But the Russians are working hard to secure permanent success by their military presence. "Hegemonism" versus "Imperialism", the Chinese would say—arms *vs.* goods. What Imperialism means today is the indispensable assistance of Western capital and technology.

In the Middle East it is not directly "Moscow *vs.* Washington." It is the rebellion of socialistic masses or minorities against despots, some modernists, other traditionalists, some linked with Americans as symbolising the "death of tradition", or the suppression of liberties, or the propping up of a discredited throne. In this area it is the World Market which is put at issue—not by Moscow but by the peoples concerned, but possibly, ultimately, for Moscow's greater glory.

IN EUROPE the frontiers of 1945 have gradually been stabilised and crystallised. Bonn and Pankow accept one another across the East-West frontier. The two armed coalitions continue to confront each other peacefully, though not without preparing for a trial of strength (but one in which Westerners do not really believe). Do Europeans really still put their trust in NATO, or in conventional forces, or in the American nuclear umbrella? No. What they trust nowadays is the caution of the Bolsheviks (aware as they must be of the incalculable dangers of a massive attack on Western Europe, and/or of the economic assistance they are receiving from that region to fulfil their historic mission to "overtake").

Having said that, the new decades we are about to enter in the 1980s promises to be anything but calm and cloudless. The Americans have found no bipartisan policy, no economic overview, no clear-cut political will of their own. The Iranian revolution illustrates the precariousness of the régimes dependent on American diplomacy *faute de mieux*. In Europe, if the Soviet Union has long since lost the prestige of a liberating post-War power, it still retains that of the world's largest standing army.

In the face of such a build-up of armaments, and such a failure to grasp what dangers threaten, are we the victims of our own illusions? Or are we really so certain of the wisdom, of the caution and the prudence, of the Soviet hegemonists?

Converse

You withdraw
to where you are
and are near
as you are far
off.
We address you
in silence.
You answer
us with the echo
that never dies, that
is as though thought
were haunted.
We set
our ear to your
presence
and the great shell
of your being
throbs with the language
that is as unknown
to us as it is
familiar,
that is the communing
at the centre of agitation
of the self with the self.

R. S. Thomas

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Peter Redgrove

Matthew with the man's face

The silverfly plucked free from the honey, safely.
The night is tangy with the mower, the cut stems,
Flies feed on the wheat's bled honey.

In bed the harvesters scythe still.
Does sleep want me? The mist develops
Four skeletal cobwebs in the clear hedge,

Brushed white by the misty cloud, parachutal.
I pick up a shell; I see the door askew of the new moon.
The trees give off glad odours, and the spiders

With white dew on their webs, dew on their claws,
Flash in the lightning, in fast talons
Gripping their meat that streams with dew.

It knocks me a mile back into bed, the thunder,
Bed that rustles like a white-leafed oak in a cave;
Quick bright filings of cloud knock at the window.

My skin is a mixture of lights,
The joint of meat is a symphony,
A lighted symphony to the flies,

My black transistor's choristers are dead silence,
The bowl of sugar is a cup of lighted bulbs,
Over our daily table we spread a black table-cloth.

The raw meat is a sexual pang,
They pack their sallow generations
In files of greasy eggs,

The back legs part and the packets,
The bales of netted eggs slide,
To them I glow only softly,

But the carcass in the moment of death
Sends out to them a dark beacon of passion,
For nutriment and practice, travelling grave.

In the quiet sun of summer
I sit in a fly's harness head
Soldierly with accoutrements,

Over me a green brass shine,
Cobbled with crystal lenses,
And during my life-time

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The drowsy purr of my wings like a city
As the sugar-lumps light up
Like a distant city or the bowl of a lighthouse,

Matthew with the man's face holding the chrism biscuit,
The baby's body all slime and light, uncanny,
Flies like dragons of leather trampling the bible's leather.

Norman Nicholson

Midsummer Fires on the Sognefjord

No sunset, no onset of the dark. The eleven-hour-
Long afternoon dims to a hesitant evening.
Overflow pipes from unseen waterfalls
Go on generating electric power;
The glacier grays into cloud; the sea eases almost tideless fingers
Among the ribs of fells

So named in our Cumbrian tongue inherited from these
Voes, viks, fosses and mosses. Down by the white
Verandah'd hotel, children enact their fake folk wedding.
Tourists converse in German and Japanese.
Away on the fjord the oil-can raft burns brighter
Downwards in the water, while outside wooden

Boat-house and shed, each family lights its fire-sign,
Flapping one to the other like flags along the swing of the shore.
The track through the orchard slowly fills with midnight.
Acres of elder and pale breakers of keck drift white on the dusk's brine;
And the map of the puckered coast-line is dirtied over
To the vague guess of a wrecker's chart.

And now, at the day's lowest dip, from aluminium-
Smelting towns, creviced in creeks, and from holiday hutments seen
Not even by noon, huge bonfires bore
Long tunnels through the mist: a spark lit a millennium
Ago floats up from un-chronicled darkness, flies westward towards the brown
Ebb-flowing of the year.

And, may be, five months from now and the North Sea's width away,
I'll watch that spark catch light beside a Cumbrian slagbank,
Where boys put matches to heaped sleepers and old bicycle tyres,
And crackers contradict the blacking out of day,
And a smoulder of cardboard and privet exhales, acrid and rank,
Faint reek of ancestral fires.

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IN THE WESTERN WORLD today, views of the Soviet Union have been profoundly influenced by dissident and *samizdat* literature; certainly to a far greater extent than within the Soviet Union itself. The greatest influence of all has been the writings of Solzhenitsyn, who has achieved a position of greater moral authority and prestige outside his own country than any Russian writer since Tolstoy. He has accurately surveyed, as on an ordnance map, the unexplored territory of the Gulag in such detail that by now it has become familiar ground to us, however savage and nightmare-ridden it may be; and he has traced its relationship to the Soviet system of government as a whole with such clarity and force that, today, when we think of the Soviet Union, it is primarily the idea of the Gulag that comes to mind and colours all our thoughts.

It is of course right that this should be so, because the Gulag and the Soviet system of government are so bound up with each other that it is impossible to think of them apart. The Gulag is the Soviet Union's own particular contribution to the art of government, and without taking it into consideration it is impossible to arrive at any just assessment of the Soviet state's fundamental objectives and policies.

It is perhaps because the United States government, in its search for *détente*, has tried so hard to separate the two, that for many Americans the very word *détente* has fallen into disrepute, and provokes feelings of profound uneasiness and misgiving. For the value of any agreements based on *détente* must ultimately depend on the mutual good faith of the contracting parties; and how could anyone trust in the good faith of a state which remains responsible for, and dependent on, the continued existence of the Gulag?

ALL THIS is no doubt true. Nevertheless, it is also true that, however extensive the Gulag may be, both in territory and in population, and however all-pervasive the system of terror on which it is based, the Gulag does not include the whole of Russia nor is Russia co-extensive with the Gulag. For millions of Russians, the Gulag is no more than a dark shadow in the background of their lives, which they ignore as best they can, and in any case is of less urgent concern than the pressing and immediate problems of their ordinary daily lives.

Unfortunately, in contrast with the wealth of knowledge now at our disposal about the historical, political and economic conditions which have determined the present state of the Soviet Union, on the whole we know very little about how the ordinary Russian lives and has his being; or about how far his way of life influences, if at all, the government which purports to represent him. Such knowledge of different peoples depends upon the free, continuous and uncontrolled communication between the inhabitants of the countries concerned which is normal and taken for granted in the Western world. Alternatively, perhaps, it might be the product of serious and exhaustive anthropological study of a people's manners and mores. But the Soviet Union is careful to keep both possible sources of knowledge under the strictest surveillance and control.

One is therefore grateful for the publication in English translation of three long stories by the popular, successful and highly regarded novelist, Yury Trifonov;[1] for popular fiction has always been one of our best guides, if only by implication, not only to how people actually live at any particular time and place, but to how they think they live.

TRIFONOV IS NEITHER a dissident nor a *samizdat* writer. He is a respected member of the Union of Soviet Writers and his novels and stories sell by the hundred thousand in the Soviet Union. It is also true, however, that in recent years his writings have aroused considerable controversy and criticism in the Soviet Union.

It is not difficult to see why this should be so. If one assumes, as many people do, that any good Russian writer today must necessarily be *samizdat* or dissident, and if officially tolerated must be a propagandist of Soviet ideology, a reading of these stories will prove somewhat disconcerting. Trifonov is by any standard a good writer, but what is equally surprising in an officially approved writer is that the picture his stories convey of Soviet life is both realistic and sombre and by implication constitutes a genuine criticism of it.

No doubt this is why his stories have in their turn aroused criticism. For in saying that Trifonov is a realistic writer one does not in the least imply that he in any way conforms to the official doctrines of Socialist Realism. Rather, as his translators suggest, he practises realism in the tradition of a Balzac, or of a Flaubert, *sans monstres et sans héros*. Trifonov has the same kind of eye for social detail, and the same sense of how much his characters are the crea-

[1] *The Long Goodbye: Three Novellas*. By YURY TRIFONOV. Translated by HELEN P. BURLINGAME and ELLENDEA PROFFER. Harper & Row, $15.00, £6.95.

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tions, or the victims, of time and place and circumstances, and there is no trace in them of those idealised features of Soviet Man which have played so large a part in Soviet fiction.

If one speaks of the "heroes" of Trifonov's stories, it is not at all in the sense that, as Socialist Realism requires, they are representative of a state of affairs in which Soviet Man has realised all the potentialities of human nature when liberated from the chains of capitalism. They are simply the central characters of his stories, and as such are as much, or more, the victims of circumstance as anyone else. But they are differentiated by a peculiar common quality which arouses a particular interest in a Western reader and may tempt him to wonder how far they truly reflect the society which Trifonov so realistically describes.

TRIFONOV MIGHT WELL have used as an epigraph for these stories the opening lines of the *Inferno*:

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
che la diritta via era smarrita

In the middle of the journey of our life
I found myself in a dark wood
Where the straight path was lost

Each of his main characters is in the middle of a journey. Each finds himself in a dark wood in which somehow he has lost his way. Each wonders where he made his mistake, and what fatal error led him to where he is now.

These doubts are inspired by a moral dilemma, which springs directly out of a conflict between self-respect and the necessary compromises and accommodations which have to be made in order to come to terms with the conditions of Soviet life. There is no suggestion that Marxism-Leninism, or Soviet ideology, or visions of the bright future open to Soviet Man can provide any kind of answer to such a problem, or that, alternatively, in the context of a communist society, it is strictly meaningless. Trifonov's heroes simply have the sense that somewhere along the way they have gone wrong, and that there is no guide, no Virgil, to lead them out of the labyrinth in which they find themselves.

The second of the stories in this volume is called *Taking Stock*, and in a sense the heroes of all of them are taking stock of their lives, but somehow the accounts will not balance and it is too late to put them right.

IN THE FIRST STORY, *The Exchange*, Vitya Dimitriev is involved in an effort to find better housing accommodation for himself, his wife and schoolgirl daughter, who all share a single room. Given the universal housing shortage in the Soviet Union, from which no one is exempt except the upper ranks of the Soviet hierarchy, this is a formidable task. In Dimitriev's case, however, an opportunity offers by way of taking in his mother, to whom he is devoted, to live with his family, which would establish a claim to larger and more comfortable living space.

Dimitriev's wife, however, detests his mother; but on this occasion she is willing to overlook her dislike, because the mother is dying of a terminal disease, so that very soon Dimitriev and his family will have their new apartment to themselves. She uses every means of pressure to make Dimitriev take advantage of their luck, and he himself finds it impossible to resist. He recognises that his wife's plan is an eminently sensible and practical one; she is one who, in the Soviet phrase, "knows how to live"—that is to say, come to terms with the harsh realities of life. Why therefore should he feel a sense of shame and abasement in exploiting, as his mother fully realises, her approaching death for purely self-seeking ends, and how and why has he become the kind of man who can live in such a way?

In *Taking Stock* a middle-aged man looks back on his life and wonders how it was that he became a successful translator, a highly lucrative profession, though what he does is, as he knows, pure hack work. His son is also well aware of it, and openly taunts him with it, while eagerly enjoying the benefits and privileges which his father's trash brings in. But looking back the father cannot see what he has done to earn such contempt, his own and his son's, only that at certain times and places along life's journey there were intimations that perhaps life might have been lived differently, though now it is too late.

In the last story, *The Long Goodbye*, the hero lives with and loves an attractive and ambitious young actress who, to advance her stage career, has an affair with a mediocre and pretentious dramatist who is enjoying a momentary success. Her lover also, an aspiring screen writer whose work has come to nothing, though he is aware of the affair overcomes his scruples and accepts the dramatist's offer of help in advancing his career. This after all is the way of the world, of those who "know how to live." Why therefore should he feel ashamed of himself?

WHAT IS REMARKABLE about these stories is that the kind of problems which trouble Trifonov's heroes are no different in kind from those of innumerable Western counterparts who equally vainly search for some justification for their lives. Thinking of the terrible sacrifices demanded of the Russian people in the last 60 years—of the Revolution, the Civil War, the famines, the Terror, the purges, World War II, the Gulag—one is driven to ask; did all that then go for nothing, so far as the way people actually live their lives is concerned?

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What is equally disconcerting is that any intimations in these stories of the possibility of happiness spring not from the present achievements of the Soviet Union, but from a past in which it had not yet arrived at its contemporary position of power and, relatively speaking, prosperity, and Moscow had not yet become the Great Wen it is today. A strong air of nostalgia pervades these stories. Their heroes, now middle-aged, think back with regret to childhood days when country lanes outside Moscow were filled with the scent and colour of lilac, now obliterated by monstrous conglomerations of tower blocks, and to fishing expeditions along streams whose banks are now embedded in concrete to form part of the amenities of a Park of Rest and Culture. So, in our own country, might some conservationist deplore the destruction of London and its environs. Is this an illusion derived from the lost paradise of childhood everywhere? Or is it a genuine reflection of what Russians feel about their cities and their countryside?

Even more strangely, to Western eyes, it is not only the physical landscape of the past that provokes nostalgia; it is from the past also that come suggestions that there may be alternative ways of life to those of contemporary Soviet society. Thus, in *The Exchange*, Dimitriev's wife and her friend are enthusiasts and connoisseurs of Orthodox Russian Art. They envy the elderly maid, Nyura, because she has always possessed an ancient icon which hangs in the corner above her bed. But for them icons are *objets d'art*; for Nyura her icon is simply and purely an object of worship and she has neither thought nor care for its possible aesthetic or commercial value.

In the same way, in *Taking Stock*, the successful translator, in distant and provincial Turkmenistan, envies and admires the humble caretaker who has eleven children and has adopted a twelfth and continues a patriarchal way of life impossible to maintain in Moscow. Contemplating the love by which he is surrounded, the hero sorrowfully and bitterly compares it with the contempt which he has, rightly, earned from his worthless son.

Yet another curious sidelight on Soviet life is thrown by the parts played in these stories by the male and female characters. It is the men who are troubled, perplexed, distressed about the meaning and significance of their lives; it is the women who have no use for such vain and futile introspection. They are eminently practical, objective and clear-sighted in their whole-hearted efforts to combat and surmount the daily difficulties of Soviet life. They are the ones "who know how to live"; it is the men who do not or cannot accept what is required of them. But what then has happened to heroic Soviet Man of revolutionary legend?

IT WOULD BE WRONG to regard these stories as covering the whole spectrum of Soviet society. Trifonov's eyes are concentrated on a limited but important section of it, which we in the West would identify with the middle class, and in the Soviet Union comprises the middle and upper-middle range of the Soviet hierarchy; bureaucrats, technologists, approved representatives of the media, enjoying many privileges denied to millions of others, but excluded from the luxuries and amenities reserved for the highest ranks of Soviet society.

The working class plays no part in these stories or in the lives of its characters. They are not concerned with ideology or politics, except the intricate bureaucratic politics of their working lives, or indeed with anything that does not immediately and directly affect themselves and their families; the family indeed, especially in the person of mothers-in-law, has an influence on them which far exceeds any efforts of official Soviet propaganda to engage their interest. Outside this narrow ambit, they are cynics; it is only when they contemplate their own lives that uneasiness and doubt begin to arise.

They are indeed, if we are to believe Trifonov, very much like ourselves and perhaps this is the most surprising and interesting thing of all about these stories. *R*

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European Diary

The New Tate

London

BRITAIN is in for an enormous surprise. We were accustomed to the old Tate Gallery. It had not altered much in recent memory; we knew it as a source of dependable pleasures and familiar controversies. As an experience it was manageable and digestible. It was predictable; it was never overwhelming.

The surprise is that suddenly the Tate is quite different. It has not only doubled in size; it turns out to be more than twice as rich as we could have guessed. Not only is the sheer extent of the building and the collection as it is now uncovered bewildering—the view they offer has a character of its own, which is challenging. The range and quality of its collections, now that we can begin to take their measure, are beyond anything we imagined. But more remarkable still, what we have now is a gallery with a thesis, and a formidable one, for which we are largely unprepared.

It will be quite impossible to condescend to the Tate in future, without the meanness and the ignorance showing. To most it will be quite plain that there is for the present nothing else of this calibre anywhere. The unity and consistency of the view will, incidentally, make it plain that this is the view and the thought of one person, Norman Reid. We do not think of him as at all assuming or obtrusive, but he is certainly uncommonly persistent and perceptive. As a result the Tate has a unity of purpose and a consistent intelligence that is not noticeable in any other museum anywhere. The demonstration and the delight that it offers will, I think, in the years to come be found to be incontrovertible.

The new Tate is about something, as the old Tate never was. There has been a profound constitutional change. The old Tate had on the modern side two different kinds of collections: the modern end of the British collection, with insular responsibilities and parochial tastes, quite distinct from the Modern Foreign collection, which was never rich or quick enough to be good. This distinction has been eliminated; there is a Modern collection *tout court*, with one set of standards, seeking a uniform level of attainment. This change is reflected in the new arrangement which forms a unity extending from the international beginnings of Impressionism in the first rooms on the left of the Rotunda, by the entrance, to the end of the new building and back through Lord Duveen's stony halls in forty-one galleries—*forty-one*: you see the scale of the operation—to the latest international things and a concluding array of big masterpieces before you get back to the Rotunda, your coats and the door. A single unity, but not a single sequence—no one believes in a mainstream any more. What we are given instead is a multifarious anthology of anti-traditions, in one or other country or in several, most of them to some degree international, the veritable variousness of art in our time.

THE THESIS OF this impressive panorama is that nothing in modern art has happened in isolation. Stanley Spencer, for example, that great painter who has been convicted of insularity and swept under the carpet or shifted ignominiously up and down the back staircase for years, splendidly fills a gallery in midstream. We find ourselves asking: isn't he, after all, as central to what painting means to us now as Picasso himself in the next room? Isn't Spencer the patron saint of the fetishistic literalness with which young painters everywhere have rediscovered the figurative potential of painting? At the start of the new circuit British Post-Impressionism hangs beside the French and, looked

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at as attentively as it is hung, it seems more substantial and original than it ever has before.

Passing on, through the revolving doors into the clean air and the clear vision of the new wing we find that ten of the rooms show British art and foreign together. Nine concentrate on British alone; only in five is a foreign achievement isolated. Of course, they are five of the best; I cannot think where else Giacometti or Rothko is shown so simply and naturally at his full stature. (And how glad Giacometti would have been to find Coldstream round the corner!) It is good to have Patrick Heron already in mind when one turns into the next room to look at the masterpieces given to the Gallery by Mark Rothko, who admired him.

The American achievement takes on at the Tate more of its solemn grandeur than I remember it to have shown anywhere. Unkindly, one might say "by contrast"; for by comparison with all the rooms that are so crowded with European art that was not bold enough to realise its own potential, the scale of American painting and the quality of logic in its directness and its courage assume their real value—better indeed, than they sometimes do on its home ground. The truth is that the point of American abstraction, like the point of all the good painting of this time, is only fully taken when it is seen in an international and in a national context as well. The meanings are simultaneously both specific, local even, and general; perhaps it is precisely this double reference of form itself that constitutes the real significance of modern art, abstract and figurative alike. Only a gallery like the new Tate, a gallery as rich and various, but above all, as intelligently conceived as this (conceived, I would guess, in essence by one person) can show it to us.

IT SOUNDS IDEAL but, in fact, in this first arrangement it is far from that. The Gallery's determination to make its point—and how one sympathises! how difficult it must have been all these years to button one's lip shut and wait!—leads it in this inaugural *accrochage* to make every point, leave nothing out as it seems (though in fact a lot that is important and beautiful is still missing), squeeze in every possible phase and aspect, though the effect is to congest the rooms with far more than they were built to hold, and hang almost edge to edge several kinds of art that are in fact intended to ally themselves with plain wall and empty space.

Perhaps it is a pity. It will certainly be a headache for visitors who expect that the art of their time will always be as manageable a proposition as the Gallery they were used to. For a few months, at least, the experience of modern art at the Tate will be quite indigestible. Personally, I think this is right; we have been too protected. We have got used to straining at the slightest gnat—we cut up rough at the first row of bricks we hear about—before we have had so much as a taste of the eccentric and refractory camel that the imaginative resource of our time has actually bred.

Is the new building quite equal architecturally to this unparalleled opportunity? I hope and believe so; I only lament that it is not an absolute masterpiece. The spaces are logical and beautiful and the total provision is ingeniously lavish. But, looking up at the ceiling—and how good it is that the new galleries like the old, should not only have natural light but be seen to have it!—we find ourselves looking at the sky between no less than three superimposed systems of ribs, each with a different character, with its own residuum of unresolved detailing and its slightly excessive ponderousness, each seeming to have been drawn by a different hand. So the maximum available daylight will be still a little less than it might have been, and will have to call discordant tungsten in aid sooner than it might have done. Moreover, the daylight falls at too steep an angle to get the best visual return out of oil paint.

THE ACHIEVEMENT at the Tate is a great one, but is the collection itself as great as it might have been? Everyone who has known the Gallery and the scene has stories of whopping examples that got away. The level is high none the less, and the representation of some half-dozen of the greatest artists, between Giacometti and Gabo, who have had a special regard for the Tate (and for Norman Reid) leaves nothing to be desired. (It is a pity that these special collections do not begin with the whole corpus of bronzes by Degas, which a generous dealer once, long ago, put within the Gallery's reach.)

How about the superlative missing examples, if they really are missing? Too many of them are, and I (who have served as a Trustee longer than most) do not think it can be doubted that it is the cumbersome and compromising system of Trustee purchasing that is to blame. From my back seat it appears that the Tate Board should resign itself to ensuring the appointment of an entirely brilliant Director and leave the purchasing to him; I would never have agreed in the old days.

In Norman Reid, the Tate has had a great Director; almost everything about his Directorship is admirable (except his recent implication that the achievement comes easiest to a marrying man). There are, it is true, one or two corners of the new galleries where, in the guise of historical comprehensiveness, some of the less memorable British art is remembered. Wild horses would not make me say which I have in mind. It would be decent if those in the profession (as I am) could refrain, as other professions must, from telling the public which of their colleagues bore them. In any case,

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Norman Reid's evident affection for British art, more and less distinguished, in his lifetime is an enormous virtue. At the Tate it is loyalty to the British experience that makes the Gallery great, and unites it.

I envy the next Director; Norman Reid has left an instrument and a resource with an incomparable potential. I pity the next Director; British culture makes its authorities bear the brunt of the oedipal antagonisms that infest it—and he (though perhaps not *she*) will surely suffer.

Lawrence Gowing

Put Out More Flags

Rome

AT THE FUNERAL of Aldo Moro's guards, there were hundreds of white flags (showing the cross) and hundreds of red flags (almost like those of the USSR). Among them were only five Italian flags, all draped over the coffins. The proportion between the two was an emblem of the importance which both Whites and Reds seem to attribute to Italy, to the State, to our national history, and to our future.

That the forces of the Left and the trade unions, openly goaded and led by the Communist party (at least until a few months ago) have been actively working to weaken our state is unarguable and understandable. In order to transform society, they needed to take over power. In order to take over power, they needed to destroy economy, finance, culture, and law, the moral ideas of their opponents and the efficiency of the State. That was their historical task; and they have carried it out with tenacity and intelligence.

What is surprising is that the corrosive forces of the Left have met no adequate resistance. One wonders why on earth the Christian Democrats have not managed (or have not wanted) to prevent the machinery of the State from being destroyed, and how it is that very often they have actually collaborated with those who were quite openly working to cut the ground from under their feet. The reasons for this are numerous, and both old and new. Let me briefly consider some of them.

AFTER DE GASPERI'S DEATH, those who were left to lead the Christian Democratic party had been brought up in opposition to the idea of a united Italy which had been struggling, in spite of frequent failures, to become a modern Western nation. Among the main leaders were often those who, like their fathers and grandfathers, had thought of themselves as men besieging an enemy castle. After the War, after 1948, they entered the castle as victors, but they still retained the outlook of besiegers; they still continued to pull down its walls and defences and to allow adventurers to carry off its treasures and furniture, not realising that those walls and defences had, like the treasures and furniture, become necessary to their own survival.

For this same reason, many Christian Democrats in power neglected administration, the modernising of laws, the reforms that gradually became necessary. They neglected discipline, failed to choose and train their staffs; and they went in for every kind of excess and for wild spending sprees that used up the country's slender resources, being quite sure that the structure of the castle was solid enough for this to be done without damaging it, and that there was no end to the wherewithal available.

These Christian Democratic leaders (not all of them, and certainly not many of their electors) had an instinctive hatred not only of the ideas of liberalism but of modern industrial society, the market economy, and private enterprise. Many of them, probably without realising it, were dreaming of a return to the 18th century, to an economy regulated by *Principe* and *corporazione*. Oddly enough, while they worked away to destroy, demoralise, and sometimes corrupt the State, they gave it more numerous, more complicated, and more important tasks to carry out.

They justified their plans in a number of ways. Above all, in the past our liberal society had produced intolerable injustices (and might still do so) which Christian charity demanded should be prevented and corrected. Besides this, some of them believed that, as Catholics, it was their duty to fight Capitalism which, according to certain historians and sociologists, was a fruit of the Protestant Reformation. It was a heresy that had to be done away with.

These Christian Democrats, some of whom were highly influential, felt not only a theological hatred for the liberal idea (for what Gronchi in 1911 called "middling respectability") but also an irresistible attraction for the Left, in particular for the socialists, who were their enemy's enemy. The Italian socialists also cling to an outdated view of society. They also want an economy that is mainly passive and alms-giving; and they want power in the hands of the bureaucracy, even if this means slowing down progress, lowering the workers' standard of living, and increasing unemployment or under-employment.

In the past fifteen years the Christian Democrats have done almost nothing that the Socialists would not like, and the Socialists have done almost

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nothing that the Communists would not like, with the result that some of the most miserable, most destructive laws were passed through parliament only as a result of votes from the Communist opposition. The result they were aiming for was an impotent, timid State. And it was only when Aldo Moro was kidnapped and killed that the Christian Democrats realised, all of a sudden, that such a state might be dangerous not only for Italy but also for themselves, for their power, and perhaps even for their Church.

How could they manage to "put out more flags"?

Luigi Barzini

Christians & Marxists

Paris

WHEN Father Gaston Fessard died (on 18 June 1978) at his work table, he was correcting the manuscript of his book *Eglise de France, prends garde de perdre la foi*[1] (French Church, beware of losing faith)—which has just been published. In 1941 he wrote a short book entitled *France, prends garde de perdre ton âme* (France, beware of losing your soul)—the first clandestine publication of "*Témoignage Chrétien*". Just after the War, in 1945, when he felt that French society was threatened with Communist infiltration, he wrote a booklet entitled "France, beware of losing freedom."

In 1941 he was addressing the whole French people, and particularly Christians, including those bishops who were often inclined to transfigure Marshal Pétain into the *sauveur de la patrie*. He drew on his incomparable talent for analysis to distinguish between what the citizen owes to Caesar and what he may refuse him. The citizen owes obedience to an administration as long as it confines itself to managing the material life of the community; he owed no obedience to the government at Vichy, which was partially subservient to German occupying authorities, and hence unable to act or to speak out in keeping with the common good. As a member of the *Résistance* from the earliest days, Gaston Fessard was saved from the Gestapo by the cool head of his superior.

The same discerning mind manifests itself in his second booklet, in which he resumed those pre-War analyses (*The Outstretched Hand, Is a Catholic-Communist Dialogue Possible?*) and rejected communism as the warring brother of Nazism. Profoundly influenced by Hegel (through the interpretations of Alexandre Kojève), he compared these two movements, both of them devoted to the destruction of human liberties: one in the name of Race, the other in the name of Class. He never let himself be "seduced", either by Pétainism or by the Progressive Left. He pursued his work as theologian and philosopher in solitude.

The third "*Beware*" is addressed to the Church to which he consecrated his life with devotion and humility. Father Fessard's appeal is in danger of being stifled. Already another posthumous book of his, dealing with the same problem,[2] has been criticised in a venomous little article in *Le Monde* by my old friend Paul Vignaux, as if this academic (and *syndicaliste*) wanted to dissuade Christians from reading Gaston Fessard. In fact he provides confirmation of the thesis he impugns, namely that as soon as a Christian starts talking the language of the Marxist-Leninists he is allowing himself to be "corrupted" by them.

NO ONE CAN HAVE FAILED to be aware—and Paul Vignaux least of all—of the extent of the Marxist temptation in Catholic circles since the last War, with movements such as those of the *Prêtres ouvriers* (Worker Priests) and *Jeunesse de l'Eglise* (Church Youth). Some of the most generous-hearted members of the Church have turned towards the proletariat to share their conditions of life and to bring them the message of Christ. Have they converted the workers to Christianity, or have they themselves without even knowing it become Marxists? Gaston Fessard does not answer this question as a political sociologist; he leaves to others the task of studying the results of this evangelisation. What he does try to show, citing chapter and verse, is how Christians allow themselves to be "seduced, compromised, corrupted or destroyed" by the Marxists, by dint of adopting their language and confusing Christian practice with Marxist *praxis*.

Naturally Gaston Fessard is quite aware of the existence of various versions of socialism; nor does he deny that there are real social conflicts. He does not overlook the humane qualities of the Christian militants who have chosen the socialist option. What is in question is Christian compromises with the Marxism of the Communists, "*intrinsèquement pervers*", atheistic and anti-Christian *per se*; compromises which are the result of a lack of critical discernment. Without even realising it, some Christian militants (including the Bishops on the Episcopal Commission) end by accepting the major

[1] *Eglise de France, prends garde de perdre la foi.* By GASTON FESSARD. Julliard, 45 Fr.

[2] *Chrétiens marxistes et théologie de la libération.* By GASTON FESSARD. Dessain et Tolra, 96 Fr.

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theses of Marxism-Leninism, convinced that provided they conserve historical materialism and avoid dialectical materialism, they are somehow retaining a scientific instrument which does not endanger their faith.

Citing chapter and verse, Gaston Fessard shows to what extent the Bishops' paper in 1972 adopted Marxism itself:

> "The class struggle is a fact and an essential datum of the working class; the transfer to socialism must come about by means of a break, peaceful or violent (=revolution): the collective appropriation of the means of production. In the realisation of their taste, the workers' movement (=the working class) must be the moving force behind the other social forces. . . . The passage to socialism cannot be achieved without the tools of Marxist analysis (which combine rigour with concern for the common good) or without the Communist Party."

These are so many statements of what are bald assumptions by the Episcopal Commission taken literally and with no real critical analysis and with many unanswered questions. Their sequence thus

Harrisburg, Holocaust, Hallelujah

Cologne

THE HEADLINE **read "Harrisburg and Holocaust", and it was not the insensitive sensationalism of some popular evening paper, but the earnest combination of a thoughtful German editorial writer, trying to make some provocative formulation of the two shocking words in order to suggest that the historic mass murders of the past might be followed by a "new wave" in the future. The debates these days about nuclear energy and the nearby dangers of the atomic reactors have been furious and upsetting. Indeed one local politician went so far as to suggest that "in order to get enough energy it might be necessary to burn the opponents of nuclear power. . . ."**

One perhaps should not make too much of such distasteful lapses, but they are all signs of a deterioration of our political language. Surely not in Germany alone are we coming close to the infamous semantics as practised in the Third Reich and what we all with some horror still think of as the "Wörterbuch des Unmenschen", that dictionary of Nazi-soiled and-twisted words and attitudes which in the post-War decades has been so sedulously avoided.

Yet the signs of degeneration, the verbal relapses, are notable. Who gets excited these days when the sports pages report how football players get "bought" and "sold" like dumb bulls in some cattle market? Isn't there a touch of the old chattel-slave mentality returning here? Who even notices any more when in our airports passengers are called out to be *abgefertigt*, to be processed, to be "finished off", as if there were no more dignified way to get on a plane? We have strippers and street-walkers, (now even organised in trade unions) who would object strenuously to the demeaning idea that they are bought and sold and finished off.

HOW MUCH OF THESE LAPSES *is in fact bad taste or mounting indifference or ominous signs for the future? Our crystal ball is unclear, very muddy indeed, if one considers the recent complications of the Eurovision-Song Contest, won by an Israeli pop group (without, as many German critics pointed out, a single vote from the German jury . . . who only a decade ago might have felt obliged to vote unanimously "for the Jews" as a kind of "moral reparation").*

The German entry had to be seen and heard to be believed—the group sent to Jerusalem sang (and jumped wildly about to) the strains of some kind of Mongolian hymn called "Jinghis-Khan." Small wonder that some of the reviewers bitterly remarked that "next year in Jerusalem" one might possibly expect to hear a hit-song from some "Punk SS-band", or perhaps (the depressed suggestion of Karl Hoche in the Munich "Süddeutsche Zeitung") a country-rock version of the Horst-Wessel-Lied.

Yet object as we might, the fact of the matter is that there was applause and approval for the Teutonic hymn of the Mongol hero from an Israeli audience in the Jerusalem studio. And was it fairness, or fascination, that prompted the Israeli jury to award that wild battle-cry out of Germany some six points? I can only wonder if the song will be translated, and begin to take its place in the Israeli hit-parade lists. In any event the Israeli winning group is already recording its prize song, "Hallelujah!", in a Munich studio, changing the melody and rhythm only a little in order to meet the needs of the local "in" style.

WELL, RICHARD WAGNER **is rejected in Israel, but a German "Jinghis-Khan" anthem is welcome. The ironies are almost too much. One thinks of Theodor Herzl, the father of Zionism, who wanted German to be the language of the future Jewish state. In my ears the words I recently heard in the Cologne Synagogue were echoing: "The relations between Jews and Germans", said Nahum Goldmann, "are among the most complex and secret-ridden in all of world-history. . . ."**

Werner Höfer

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provides a statement of the most classical Marxism, in which the Commission *justifies* not some general "socialist option" for the workers, but "the necessity for them to be Marxists out of fidelity to Justice and Solidarity." Such an obligation still remains a matter of choice "for the other social categories." The Marxologist may argue about the interpretation of Marxism to which Gaston Fessard is referring, but it is valid for Marxist-Leninists, even if they have forgotten its philosophical origins.

IT IS NOT for a man who does not share the faith of Father Gaston Fessard to take part in debates among Catholics. But as his friend for over 30 years, and a witness of the intellectual courage and love of truth which possessed him and which guided his pen, I feel I have the right to defend him against unfair attacks or the falsification of his thinking. For the rest, I recommend readers to the book itself, the testament of a Catholic whose faith and political discernment through the last half-century were never trapped in the pitfalls of "History."

Raymond Aron

Prize-Winners

Zurich

"THERE is no collective in the city or the country, no far-away team of geological prospectors in the Taiga, no merchant ship on the seas or isolated village in the mountains where the books of Leonid Brezhnev, *Little Land* and *The Reconstruction*[1] are not read and re-read and studied again, as inexhaustible sources of thoughts and ideas. . . ."

So wrote *Pravda* about the Lenin Prize-winning author (one imagines the award was unanimous and that there was no other candidate). Like Stalin in his time, he embodies certain unique qualities of political infallibility and literary genius, at least so long as he lives and holds supreme command. Has any author's works—not surely since Mao Tse-tung's *Little Red Book*—been so systematically praised and distributed for the hundreds of millions? Possibly with this difference—that they do not, in these more enlightened days, need necessarily to be actually read, or recited out loud or waved in the air, for it is quite enough that they be available everywhere as a kind of documentation of the omnipresence of the great and powerful man.

In point of fact the material involved consists only of two 30-page-long articles which originally were published in the Moscow journal, *Novy Mir*. As Victor Nekrassov has pointed out (and he himself is also a Lenin Prize-winner), it was in the same *Novy Mir* that, after Khruschev gave his official permission, Solzhenitsyn's first novel, *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, had appeared. The wind blew differently in those days, but also with storm-like intensity. Poor unfortunate Pierre Daix in Paris, still worried about the feelings of old Stalinists like Maurice Thorez, had to submit to pressure from the Soviet Ambassador to complete his translation of *Denisovich* with more dispatch!

The liberal posture then reinforced the new anti-Chinese line—for surely all the "European cultures" had something in common with each other that was foreign to the "barbarian", "totalitarian" China—what a strange and revolting cult was this adoration of the work of Mao! And now comes a new cult, at least for the time being, of the literary works of yet another Marxist-Leninist genius. If the vaunted "Dialectic" of historical materialism has still any intellectual uses, then it might explain away such contradictions and perhaps "transcend" them.

Am I, in worrying about such facets of East-West literary life, succumbing to "Cold War" prejudices? Why isn't it possible for a powerful politician, even a dictator, to be a good writer and a genuinely popular author? Remember Marcus Aurelius, think of some of the Indian Moghuls; yes, indeed, rulers and despots have been masters of prose. Why not Leonid Ilyich? But in the prose is the answer. The prose is the man, and the man is not a sovereign force above and beyond the State bureaucracy but is only a part of that vast grey apparatus, and reflects its style, ambitions, and utter greyness. The members of the Lenin Jury which awarded the prize needed no long sessions to discuss and evaluate. They knew only too well the vanities of the new ruling class and its élite figures, their literary longings, their penchant for prizes, their dreams of longevity and ubiquity.

It is a kind of Byzantism, but it hardly pervades all of the literary sector; quite the contrary. The poet Andrei Voznesensky has also been given prizes and distinctions, enjoys special privileges, and may well be read in the Taiga by wandering geologists. Yet there is a deep difference between politicians in literature, and littérateurs in politics. The game is played differently. In the struggle over the recent anthology, *Metropol*, prose and poetry

[1] They have just been published in English translation under the title *How It Was* (Pergamon Press, £4.00, $10.00; paper £1.50, $4.00).

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pieces collected by a number of leading Soviet writers on non-political but still critical themes in everyday Russian life, the power-political scene takes on unusual colours. Here members of the élite are not out to acquire more medals but are willing to take chances and put their privileges at risk. Some of the *Metropol* authors, like Voznesensky, and Aksyonov, and Iksander, have had their books and plays and films postponed, their royalties suspended, their trips abroad cancelled. They in turn have threatened resignation from the Writers Union—meaning virtual unemployment—if some of the younger and unknown writers are punished for daring to write as they pleased. The boss of the Moscow Writers' Union has called the *Metropol* anthology nothing less than "*pissoir*-literature"; and now no Soviet Ambassador is pressing anybody abroad to hurry up with their translations for the greater glory of a "European" (i.e. non-Chinese) Russian literary spirit. Still, the anthology is being translated at the moment into a number of foreign languages, as if to document another kind of omnipresence, the non-conformist spirit seeking a voice of its own.

Powerful governments and powerless writers make a curious combination. Ambitious politicians intrude on the literary scene; ambitious writers step on political toes. Once, when he was locked up in a prison he knew not where, after a trial he couldn't remember, Lukács (it was just after the Hungarian Revolt of 1956) changed his mind and remarked that "Kafka is, after all, a socialist realist! . . ." Brezhnev as a Great Writer suggests that novels like *The Trial* should be written only by Prosecuting Attorneys and *The Castle* only by those who actually live in regal *dachas* behind high walls. Kafkas are un-persons.

François Bondy

Suicide of a Nation

Rome

IT IS WITH ENVY and admiration that I always read thoughtful articles two or three columns long and essays covering many pages in which writers cleverer and better informed than myself, known as *politologues*, discuss what is wrong with Italy. I read them full of hope, just as if I were buying a lottery ticket and saying to myself: "Suppose this is the lucky one?" Their prose is often quite impenetrable, as rich as a cream pudding, full of obscure historical references, mustering ancient arguments, quoting forgotten thinkers, using foreign words.

I often have to read each line over again in order to follow the argument, and cannot always understand at once what the writer is trying to prove. In the end I realise that, lurking behind the dark curtains of their prose and the almost indecipherable allusions, is an almost too obvious and elementary diagnosis. The troubles of Italy are due to a single cause, the one the writer had in mind before he set out to study the problems and to put pen to paper.

Time after time (I quote a few random examples) I read about the decline of religious feeling or the excessive power of the Church, the indifference of or the dug-in stubbornness of the Middle Classes; of the *Risorgimento* that went wrong; the private ownership of the means of production; the State's hopelessness in business; fascism and anti-fascism; the reduction to beggary of honest, serious men; the lack of a Protestant Reformation; excessive liberty; lack of freedom; and so on and so on.

All these ideas, as we know, are not at all new. They have been set out, taken apart, and discussed for years, some by our fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers and ancestors for centuries, with no visible result. I sometimes wonder, therefore, if the true reasons for the ills of Italy (or more exactly for the ills of contemporary Italy) are not to be found elsewhere; whether all the things these thinkers are describing are merely results, not causes; and whether the darkness that so often engulfs their prose may not be masking a reality which they do not know, or which they will not or cannot confront.

THE SUSPICION THEN comes to me that the real question to be faced is this: Why are the majority of Italians rushing, spontaneously and irresistibly, open-eyed, towards disaster, a disaster possibly combined with dishonour and ignominy, without anyone being able to stop them? Not all Italians, mind you. No doubt the readers, journalists, and the editor of my favourite newspaper, as well as many others, scattered here and there in all social classes, who care for the public good and the future and sometimes manage to prevent the worst, are exceptions. But there remains an overlarge, determining majority. Why?

In other words, why do these Italians prefer to take heed of leaders who are not only catastrophic but often demented, why do they enthusiastically follow them in crazed adventures, why do they trust only the parties that show the country the way to bankruptcy and ruin? I will not linger over distant historical precedents (though they exist). I will merely say that this tendency has been almost constant from 1919 until recently, with the single

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exception of the 1950s, and that today it is moving at an even faster rate, *motus in fine velocior*. Why, in other words, are the Italians behaving like lemmings?

LEMMINGS, which belong to the species *cricetidae*, are small rodents that live in the northern tundra, the best known of them being the *Lemmus lemmus*, from Norway. From time to time they form enormous gatherings (like the oceanic assemblies in Piazza Venezia or the rallies in Piazza San Giovanni Laterano), millions of them stretching from horizon to horizon; and then, at a certain point, they start racing as hard as they can go towards the sea, where they dive in and drown. Scientists have never managed to discover why (just as our politologues don't really know why many Italians are so tenaciously pursuing national suicide). The hypotheses in the case of the lemmings are varied and irreconcilable.

Obviously the Italian lemmings are not running; Instead they move to the polls and vote. The great majority of them vote for parties that, for decades, have clearly and unmistakably been pushing Italy back into history. Here and there the parties meet resistance, as I have said, which means that their task is not always easy, nor is their progress (or regression) always rapid and certain. Here and there in fact there still survive people, groups, and institutions, deaf to all entreaty, who stubbornly carry on behaving as if they lived in a serious country, and they do try to improve things. Sometimes they manage it. Yet it cannot be denied that Italy has for the most part gone back to the time before its vaunted national revival.

"Suicidal" Footnotes

'Ultimate Cult Leader.'

PROPAGANDA *has many cunning passages. How, in the Communist world, would the tragic affair of the mass suicides in Guyana's Jonestown be reported and interpreted? To judge from the East Berlin commentaries, here was even more evidence for the Marxist-Leninist thesis of the decadence of Capitalism. As the DDR-weekly,* Sonntag, *wrote:*

> **"The horrible death of the 900 cannot be ascribed merely to the Sect's leaders. . . . Without the context of that kind of 'freedom' in which such strong men can get power, such sects could not grow. . . . Does this upset the mass media of the capitalist countries? Are they prepared to make an honest analysis?"**

And how! Books and articles are rolling off the presses, with theories galore, especially among the professional doom-sayers of the Western world. For example, the fact that all the Guyana dead were willing to leave "our best of all possible worlds" was taken by Der Spiegel *to be an indictment of the Western way of life, and something that we should not repress or explain away.*

> **". . . They renounced forever all the values of our society. They stopped the world, and got out. . . ."**

Is, then, suicide to be taken as a thermometer-reading of the health of a people or a way of life? Think for a moment of all the near-suicidal attempts of thousands, even millions, to flee Communist-ruled tyrannies from the East Berlin wall to the frontiers of Viet Nam. If some of these dead—shot at the barbed wire or drowned in South-east Asian waters—are added to the Suicide Rate, what political conclusions could one draw from these horrific statistics?

BUT, TO BE SURE, *real figures and reliable data are hard to come by, and neither from Eastern Germany nor from any other Soviet-bloc country are such*

HELMUT SCHOECK is a leading German sociologist, and is professor at the University of Mainz. Among his books is a most stimulating work on "Neid" which was translated and published in 1970: *Envy: A Theory of Social Behaviour* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich).

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BANDITS roam the streets and attack the banks, as they did in the days of Fra' Diavolo and the *Passatore*; the well-to-do are kidnapped, the powerful are guarded by hired toughs, like Don Rodrigo; corpses are found every morning in the city streets; public services work on and off and reluctantly; adolescent girls on their own are savagely raped; business is in the hands of adventurers, many of whom take risks arrogantly and illegally; many industries are overwhelmed by debts; agriculture is in the doldrums; corruption and poverty are spreading; and money is gradually losing its value as it did when the princes used to clip gold coins. As in the past, foreign powers absent-mindedly decide our fate and regard us with pity and contempt.

To be sure, not all the main political parties behave like this. There are some who—either through native ignorance, or to avenge old wrongs, or through the senile whims of charismatic leaders, or in order to follow a broad, long-term, well-coordinated plan with great intelligence—are indeed busy dragging us along to hunger, rags, unemployment, national beggary, and bloody civil strife, and making us incapable of maintaining or defending ourselves.

But there are others, the *passive*, who have for the most part casually wasted the small resources of a poor country, who have ruled as if this was not their own country, in which they and their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren would reside until death, but a land they had conquered and were merely passing through, in which everything was allowed.

But the problem is clearly not the behaviour, active or passive, of the political parties and trade

to Jonestown

statistics made available. The secrecy itself is revealing. Social scientists for almost a century now have believed that the frequency of suicide indicates at least something about the state of the nation and its citizens' "pursuit of happiness".

So the first question that springs to mind, if it is "honest analysis" that we are after in East and West, is: Which great and enviable country in all the world has one of the lowest suicide rates? It might upset certain mass media to register the hard fact: the United States of America. Per hundred thousand population the suicide rate (for the year 1975) was 12.7. In Hungary it was 38.4. Thus, in that happiest and freest of all "Iron Curtain" countries, the land (in Khrushchev's phrase) of "goulash socialism", there are three times as many persons who stop-the-world-and-get-off as in America.

The British, for all their troubles, have a rather low figure of 7.9 and even lower of course are the small "traditional" societies: Greece with 2.8, Ireland 3.5, Italy 5.8. Portugal has a figure of 8.6 and the Netherlands 9.2. But in progressive Sweden, where a social-welfare state has been flowering for decades and happiness has been socialised, each year some 20 citizens per 100,000 population take their own lives. Comparative figures are: Japan 18.1, Switzerland 18.5, West Germany 21.6, and Austria 24.1.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, *an annual figure is only a "snapshot", and the full picture only emerges when the suicide statistics are looked at in terms of decades. In the years since 1900 the American suicide rate exceeded a figure of 15 only twice (a pre-World War year, a Depression year). But wars themselves appear to have a lowering effect on suicide rates; it almost appears to be a "natural law", discovered by social observers in the 19th century and evidently confirmed during the years of World War I. The two World Wars in which the USA was involved rapidly brought the suicide rate down to a more "normal" figure of 10. Here are some of the annual figures: 1900 (10.2); 1920 (10.2); 1943 (10.2); 1955 (10.2); 1968 (10.6). There was only one single-figure statistic in this century—9.8 for the year 1957, at the high—or perhaps low—point of General Eisenhower's Presidency.*

WHERE, THEN, DO *East and West meet in this "suicidal" competition? Only recently, to quote from* Der Spiegel *again, so-called honest Western analysis suggested that:*

". . . Every society has the illnesses it deserves, the diseases it causes. In this perspective the average rate of suicide in our *Bundesrepublik*—38 dead per day—is the price we are paying for the blessings of our West German economic miracle. . . ."

Well, according to the statistics for 1976 the figure per 100,000 of the West German population was 21.6. For 1894 the German figure was: 21.7. For 1910: 21.6. For 1920: 21.7. Must we, then, not conclude that if, over half-a-century and more, twice as many Germans take their own lives as do Americans, "capitalist prosperity" or "economic miracles" or any other "blessings" of an energetic society are not exactly the determining causes of such individual tragedies? In this respect little has changed in Germany from Bismarck to Brandt.

Helmut Schoeck

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unions. It is clear that Communists, Socialists, the CGIL, the Christian Democrats, and others have behaved as they should, according to their natures, ideologies, passions, and past histories. It is not the fault of the unions, for instance, that when in 1969 they asked peremptorily for what amounted to the ruination of industry and the economy, and indeed for inflation and unemployment, the parties in the government conceded everything to them without hesitation, indeed sometimes merrily and enthusiastically.

THE REAL FAULT lies with those who gave these parties—either in the government or in opposition—the power to rule Italy. Power today is conferred by votes. In other countries and other ages these votes would have gone mainly to solid, prudent, responsible parties who cared about treating the country's ills and leading the nation into the modern world, towards Europe, towards greater justice and prosperity. This, then, is the fundamental question which I never see answered anywhere: why are most Italians racing like lemmings to drown themselves in the sea?

Luigi Barzini

Between Frost & Thaw

Paris

TWO leading Soviet ideologists, Comrades Ponomaryov and Sagladin, were present in St-Ouen at the 23rd Congress of the French Communist Party, and this appeared symptomatic for the newly-established harmony between Marchais and Moscow. Relations between French Communists and their big brothers in the USSR had been slightly strained, but in no way comparable to the cool distance and even icy critical exchanges between the Soviet party and the Italian party, which under Enrico Berlinguer, has been talking for years about "openings" and "revision" and "European unity" and even "pluralistic democracy."

Under the leadership of Maurice Thorez the French party was markedly more Stalinist than the Italian; and when it made its break—the French rather military term for it is "*Détachement*"—the Italian post-Stalinist period was quite different from the uncompromising Gallo-Communist nationalism of the French comrades. True, in his five-hour conference speech Georges Marchais made a point of not pronouncing "Euro-Communism" to be dead; still, the major emphasis was on the renewed accord with the Soviet bloc of Communist states.

So can one now conclude that Moscow has re-established its control or "leading influence" on a powerful West European movement? And is it true, as the dissident ideologist Jean Elleinstein put it, that "an ice age" has replaced "the thaw"? (These metaphors irritated the leadership so much that innumerable references were made to them in St-Ouen and in *L'Humanité*).

Against the onset of a new "frost" there had been the warnings of several hundred intellectuals, in old Party magazines, in newly-established reviews, even in the bourgeois media; but there was little left of this "*contestation*" when the well-oiled machinery of the Party got into gear. What could a few unhappy French writers on the Left do against the stalwart and confident forces of some "70,000 professional activists and 12,000 loyal intellectuals", to whom Marchais proudly referred? None of the heretics was expelled; they were all simply overwhelmed.

Still, the new "iciness" is not of Russian or Siberian provenance, but French; and indeed the *rapprochement* with the Moscow Central Committee was possibly not even the essence of it. What was it then? Let us remember that when Georges Marchais took over the leadership of the party—Roland Leroy was a strong hopeful in those days, and he is now no longer on the secretariat of the Central Committee—the Communists were everywhere stronger than the Socialists on the French Left. After Marchais' policy of a "Common Programme", after his strong unconditional support of François Mitterand in the presidential elections, traditional popular support for the CP waned, and the SP grew. The Communists were no longer in the forefront. The stronger the general Left became, the weaker its particular Communist sector.

Marchais was quick and energetic to draw the consequences, and with such *élan* that he was able to maintain his personal leadership, despite the obvious failures, and indeed even to strengthen it. No small political achievement! Working against him was (in the slangy phrase) "Comrade Frust"—the frustration and disappointment widespread on the Left—and also "Comrade Frost", the old ice-cold dogmatists who, with Leroy, had been against any kind of innovation or renewal. Marchais manoeuvred brilliantly; and even Professor Pierre Juquin, who had publicly supported the various dissidents, has now been included in the top

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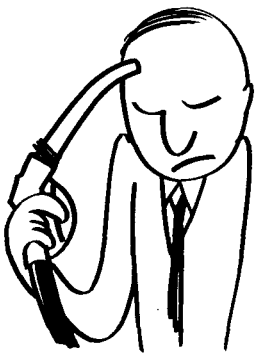
leadership. All in all, in my view, what has happened is not so much a submission to Moscow as a reconsolidation of a battered movement, which can now continue its old tactic of watchful waiting.

François Bondy

The Micawber Principle

Paris



IT PROBABLY IS surprising: in December 1978 we edited an issue of *L'Express* with a cover proclaiming "*Pétrole, encore de beaux jours*" (Oil, more fine days yet), whereas now we offer an issue on the necessary rationing of energy.

In reality the two subjects are distinct. The first problem was one of oil reserves and their upward re-estimation over the last ten years. Today we have to deal with the effect of political, economic and psychological factors on supply and consumption of energy, which at present comes mostly from natural gas and oil.

Hydrocarbon reserves may be variously estimated by the experts, and the differences between the pessimists and optimists, all of them "world-famous", are of several hundred billion tons. But even the most pessimistic are talking about much *greater* reserves than those which were accepted at the start of the decade. Despite the parallel growth of consumption, the fatal day of real scarcity due to shortage of oil, *presupposing full utilisation of the world's production capacity*, has been continually postponed: 1985, 1990, 2000 .... As for the final exhaustion and collapse of our "oil civilisation", the date is located around 2050 by the pessimists, for example by J. A. Grégoire in his new book *Vivre sans pétrole* (Flammarion). That would leave mankind time to find alternative solutions.

But the quantity of energy available and transported to the places where it is required and consumed does not depend only on the volume of proven or probable reserves. From 1940 to 1945, and even until 1950, Europe was cold, not because the world's coal stocks were exhausted—they are still abundant—but because temporary military-political disturbances were paralysing its extraction and transportation. The full utilisation of the world production capacity of a particular kind of energy, and its harmonious distribution as a function of demand, is a schoolboy hypothesis. What additional factors are undermining that formula today?

FIRST, A POLITICAL FACTOR. The brutal rise in the price of oil late in 1973 and the threat of total suspension of shipments was a result of the Arab countries' determination to make their wishes felt.

This political determination only hastened the inevitable end of the days of cheap energy. Apart from circumstance and the Arab-Israeli conflict, it has been prolonged in the tendency of the exporting countries to eke out their own reserves. (Mexico is the most recent example of this prudent and quite legitimate calculation, as President Portillo made bluntly clear to President Carter.) Then there are disturbances in the Third World which are liable to upset supplies to the industrialised countries, suddenly and unexpectedly—as in Iran. A recent study published by the London Institute of Strategic Studies has just described the political instability and destabilisation of the exporting countries, starting with Saudi Arabia, as a fundamental cause of the energy insecurity of the client countries.

Economic factors are even more unpredictable, not only in principle but in their time-scale. They hinge upon one very clear cause: the big importing countries (France among them) pay for their energy with the proceeds of their exports. If, then, the cost and consumption of energy goes on rising, we will rapidly reach the absurd situation in which we shall have to export such a high proportion of our production that we will be forced, so to speak, to live poorly in order to remain rich. This self-destruction of Western prosperity based on oil is a grotesque prospect.

LASTLY, THE HUMAN FACTOR is, in the present state of affairs, the most decisive. The Americans are already experiencing queues outside petrol filling stations and (according to *Time*) will go on enduring this all summer long. It happened before in July 1973, just before the Yom Kippur war, before the oil crisis, before the quadrupling of oil prices, before the world economic recession. One of the reasons for that shortage was the same as today's: a clash of interests between Ecology and the Automobile.

Without overlooking other more temporary causes (e.g. stockpiling), the American struggle for the protection of the environment has led to limiting the construction of new oil refineries, especially in California, while oil consumption has been growing by 5 to 7% per annum in certain States. As London's *Financial Times* commented on 12 May:

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"The imbalance between the supply of crude oil and demand is not that great. But given the world's insatiable appetite for petroleum it does not take a lot to move from feast to famine. . . ." And the paper went on to quote Mr Micawber's famous maxim: "Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen pounds nineteen and six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery. . . ."

If there has to be rationing in order to reduce our energy consumption, it will only hit at that part of consumption known as "waste" or *gaspillage* in France. It is therefore voluntary savings which should be envisaged, as European ministries are doing, rather than some form of authoritarian rationing which always gives rise to black-marketeering. To quote just one figure, it would be enough for the people of Western Europe to reduce their domestic winter heating by a single degree, on average, in order to reduce our heating consumption by 7%. Heating accounts for one-third of our total consumption of energy, which would therefore be reduced by 2.3%. Remember that in the United States, which we readily accuse of large-scale waste, the speed limit has been reduced to 90 kph for some time now.

So, in the present situation, to think about rationing is not inevitable or fatalistic, nor is it paranoid. The crisis is not incurable; but nor is it artificial. For the time being we will be asked to do without superfluities. Surely we can do without too much, if only out of fear of having some day to do without enough.

Jean-François Revel

Terror Targets

Milan

THAT OLD SLOGAN of Mussolini's, "*Vivere pericolosamente* (Live Dangerously)!" still has relevance for many sectors of Italian life, and perhaps none more so than in the Padua academic community. Early in the spring there were the elections to the student assembly, and the participation—some 6,000 out of 60,000—is considered fairly high. Taken together, the liberal and the Catholic elements had about half of the vote, with the Left running behind at 34%. Then all hell broke loose. Dons and professors who had emphasised the importance of standing up and being counted were set up to be knocked down. It is not undangerous to take a clear position against the preachers of "Terror" and the excesses of the "*Autonomi*."

The automobile of a psychology don was set on fire, followed by more arson against the vehicles of a professor of agriculture and a philosopher. On 14 March a bomb went off in the flat of yet another faculty member. The "pressure" proceeded apace, and even escalated: Professor Guido Petto was given a savage beating with iron rods; and it was with wooden clubs that the dean of the literary faculty, Ottone Longo, while waiting for a bus, was knocked to the ground by two masked attackers who left him with a broken arm and serious head wounds.

This kind of terror is no longer a "clandestine" activity, and the "*Autonomi*" groups are quite public. Like the solid 120-page journal *Controinformazione*, with its editorial address in Milan, the magazine *Autonomia* is available in the Padua bookshops and has a circulation of some 5,000 copies. Nor is there anything secret about the so-called "Radio Sherwood" (as if Padua was a forest teeming with Robin Hoods) run by Emilio Vesce, who has now been arrested. The polemical targets are not only in academe but also in the working-class movement, and the attacks are steady against the villainous activities of the Italian trade unions. Indeed they appear to be completely surrounded by pernicious enemies, and their advertising slogan is, "*Whoever doesn't read 'Autonomia' is either a priest or a spy!*" It is almost as if a subscription would be protection against the widespread violence of the hit men—and they always justify the tactic of leg-shootings (what used to be called "*gambizzazione*", and is now called "*azzoppamento*", from "*zoppicare*", to limp, for the rationale is that it is all preparing for "the period of mass action."

After all, Marxist theory usually takes a dim view of the assassin's "petty-bourgeois individualism" and insists on the "responsible controls" of a mass movement. In this the "*Autonomi*" are rather more in the traditional revolutionary line than are the more extreme factions like the "*Brigate Rosse*" and "*Prima Linea*."

Still, the struggle is not all one-sided. Rome, still on the trail of the Aldo Moro kidnappers and killers, has now struck in Padua with the arrest of the Professor of Law, Toni Negri. He may or may not be connected with the Moro murder, but he was one of the most eloquent of the ideologists who inspired the turn to violence. With Toni Negri, who studied in Göttingen and taught at the Sorbonne,

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the police sought Franco Piperno who succeeded in fleeing—Piperno's wife, Flora Pirri Ardizone, is a Sicilian millionairess, a kind of southern counterpart to the rich Milan publisher, the late Giangiacomo Feltrinelli. (Precious little is heard these days about the old theory that Feltrinelli had not accidently blown himself up with a bomb but had been murdered by Fascist right-wingers; in testimony in recent trials even the left-wingers now concede it was an "honourable accident" in the service of the movement . . .).

What is especially dramatic about the events in Padua is the role of the local Communist Party, which has energetically taken up the struggle against the "*Autonomisti.*" After all, two of the victims (Professors Petto and Longo) were members of the Party and had consistently argued that Terrorism in Italy, even when it paraded itself in slogans of the Left, really was a phenomenon of the Right, part of a reactionary strategy to create confrontation and tension. But any observer who hears the radio broadcasts, reads the pamphlets and magazines, and knows a little of the personal backgrounds of the terrorist ultras (so many of them are militants who split to the left from the Catholic Action or Communist Party ranks) can hardly accept this kind of semantic juggling. The Terrorist Left is what it is, and believes in what it says and does, down to "signing with the blood of the enemy. . . ."

Will Rome be able to prove the guilt of Padua? The cadres of the "armed Party" may not enjoy the support of the toiling masses, but it benefits from public apathy and the understandable fear of eye-witnesses who are reluctant to come forward with evidence and testimony. I found considerable concern everywhere here that the counter-blows against the Padua ideologists may not succeed in the courts, and thus only serve to strengthen the "*contropotere*", the prestige of the "Anti-State" forces.

François Bondy

The Border

I wake and find the world that I was dreaming
is not this one
where soldiers are lumbering on board:

these lights must be a town
a border
marking some old fault, some valley or river.

All I know is that it is cold
and must be colder outside
where someone coughs
and the wind revives a tree that shivers
and wants to sleep.

I pull down my bags
and hear next door the soldiers' language
and know now what their faces must be like.

Yes yes it is well after midnight
says my watch and resumes its weary tale
starting from when I fell asleep

as I fumble for my passport

as the guard stamps his thumbprint

as the train at last breathes out
and begins to cross the river.

Kevin Hart

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Out of the Quarrel

On Sylvia Plath—By ANTHONY THWAITE

THREE YEARS AGO IN ENCOUNTER, in an essay pegged to the recent appearance of Sylvia Plath's *Letters Home*,[1] I said that: "The time to make sense of Sylvia Plath will be when Faber & Faber eventually get round to publishing a properly edited Collected Poems—something long promised but long delayed." At this moment, over sixteen years after her death, there is still no sign of such an edition. I believe (or I *think* I believe, for nothing in this area seems certain) that several years ago the Sylvia Plath Estate (in the person of Ted and Olwyn Hughes) together with Faber & Faber commissioned what was to be the authorised biography from an American called Lois Ames. That too seems to have foundered, as I think it was bound to. If it took more than 45 years after Hardy's death to get a satisfactory biography of Hardy (from Robert Gittings) and more than 75 years after Emily Dickinson's death to get a satisfactory biography of Emily Dickinson (from Richard Sewall), it doesn't seem likely that a satisfactory Plath biography will appear in my lifetime. A number of people of about my age (that is, of Sylvia Plath's age if she had lived) will have to die before some patient, intelligent, non-axe-grinding biographer can piece the whole thing together and publish it.

What there will be, and what there increasingly is, is plenty of partial views, plenty of gossip, a great deal of deviousness and subterfuge from those who knew her and a great deal of speculation and analysis from those who didn't. Edward Butscher falls into the last category, up to his knees if not up to his chin. The aptly named Butscher has already given us *Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness*,[2] and he now edits and introduces *Sylvia Plath: The Woman and the Work*,[3] a collection of essays, half of them reminiscences by people who in one sense or other knew her, from an early college boy-friend (Gordon Lameyer) to a Devon neighbour (Elizabeth Sigmund), and half of them critiques of the work. The whole is prefaced by Mr Butscher's lucubrations on the plaintive theme, "Who is Sylvia?" Confident in his reconstructions, he tells us how—after painful and painstaking "research"—he came to the conclusion:

> I knew what had to be known and tried to intuit the rest, my personal egotism and literary absorptions responding readily to those same qualities as they had sculpted the features of one Sylvia Plath. At times, the portrait was still far too romantic and vague, more art than biography, but that also suited the pattern of a career founded upon masks, nurtured in myth-making, hammered true by the adolescent vortex where artifice has its forge.

I am sure that Mr Butscher and his contributors will not be the last to air their egotisms and literary absorptions in this way, or indeed the last to mix their metaphors so exuberantly in pursuit of the elusive Sylvia Plath. Mystery encourages such stuff. According to Elizabeth Sigmund: "When a writer from America wrote to ask if I could see her to talk about Sylvia, I went and asked Ted what he felt. His answer was: 'The time to tell the truth about Sylvia is when you are dying'."

THAT MYSTERY AND OBFUSCATION, as well as pregnant misreading, have helped to create a Plath cult is undoubtedly true. That there *is* a cult-like interest in her life and work (the two often seen as inextricable) can't be denied, particularly since the publication of *Ariel* in 1965 and the later considerable commercial success enjoyed by her novel *The Bell Jar* when it was eventually published in the United States. (Its British publication, by Heinemann under her pseudonym "Victoria Lucas", just before her death, caused hardly a ripple; though to give

[1] *Letters Home* (Faber & Faber, 1976). See "I have never been so happy in my life", by Anthony Thwaite. ENCOUNTER, June 1976.

[2] Edward Butscher, *Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness* (Seabury Press, 1976).

[3] *Sylvia Plath: The Woman and the Work*. Edited with an introduction by EDWARD BUTSCHER. Peter Owen, £7.95; Dodd, Mead & Co., $8.95.

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him proper credit, Laurence Lerner's review in *The Listener* was perceptive, sympathetic and admiring.) But the word "cult" implies smallness, restriction and exclusion, and what I'm often struck by is the wide spread of her reputation, not only in Britain and the United States but elsewhere. On a tour of India earlier this year, I found many Indians (especially women, but not always) asking about her, wanting me to talk about her, and enthusiastic to air their own views. I gather the same is true in France, in Germany, in Italy, in Japan.

Such devotion, or obsession, can take odd forms. Look at the envious poems written by Anne Sexton (who once went to writing-classes with Sylvia Plath at Boston University) when Sylvia killed herself first. (Anne Sexton managed it several years later.) Or look at the poem, "For Sylvia at 4.30 a.m.", by one Paula Rothholz in Mr Butscher's collection. It ends:

The oven waits.
Watch me
all you murdering
daddy-o's—

The gas too
has a cock
sucker!

No literary editor or new anthology editor nowadays is spared a spate of such offerings—elegies and monodies and threnodies for Sylvia, poems indelibly wearing her fingerprints, rapt communings with her and about her and in her style. In this area of emotional self-identification and lay therapy, the amateur's diagnosis tends to attach to itself the unquestioning authority of the professional's autopsy. Every girl her own analyst! Everyone his own dissector of the Plath corpse and corpus!

I FIND A GREAT DEAL of this activity deeply (or shallowly) morbid and repellent. To be fair, the memoir pieces in Mr Butscher's collection are not all as awful as they might be: Dorothea Krook's view of her in a teacher/pupil relationship in Cambridge is dignified and decent, and modest because she doesn't pretend to any great intimacy; and both Clarissa Roche and Elizabeth Sigmund have some insights and memories which—if they are "true"—may have some significance. What is hardest to take is when the Butscher-handed exegetes wade in, reading the work back into the life and triumphantly emerging with syllogisms. Thus, almost at random, Robert Phillips in his essay "The Dark Funnel: A Reading of Sylvia Plath":

> The title poem, "Winter Trees", for instance, displays Plath's identification with trees (the

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name Sylvia, after all, is the feminine form of Sylvanus, "living in the wood"), and her envy of them for their freedom from woman's fate of copulation, abortion, and bitchery. Tree weddings are seen as merely the quiet accretion of new growth-rings; their seedings are totally effortless, unlike the sweat and heave of human procreation. Like Leda, they are full of wings and other-worldliness. (When Zeus coupled with Leda, he did so in the form of a swan.) Yet we should not forget that in Plath's radio play, *Three Women*, one of the three equates winter trees with death, perhaps the natural conclusion of such inhuman congress. Another of the women cries that there "is a snake in swans." Sex in any form seems to repel.

To consider just Mr Phillips's first observation, then, critics should take a close look at my own work, bearing the Christian name I do, for veiled reference to pigs, temptation, and possibly Cleopatra-women. No doubt they will find them.

In an interview she recorded (which has often been quoted) with Peter Orr of the British Council in October 1962, three and a half months before she killed herself, Sylvia Plath said:

> I think my poems immediately come out of the sensuous and emotional experiences I have, but I must say I cannot sympathise with these cries from the heart that are informed by nothing except a needle or a knife, or whatever it is. I believe that one should be able to control and manipulate experiences, even the most terrifying, like madness, being tortured, this sort of experience, and one should be able to manipulate these experiences with an informed and intelligent mind.

These images—needle, knife—can be found in fact in a number of Plath poems; but, as she says, they are "manipulated"—not in the sense of being "worked up" but of being "worked out." It isn't really poetry as problem-solving, as self-therapy, but poetry as an art, as a craftsmanlike manipulation of the given material: images, words, rhythms. In a broadcast selection of her poems she made for me in June 1961 (quoted more extensively in my ENCOUNTER piece already referred to), she said by way of introduction:

> They are, quite emphatically, about the "things of this world." When I say "this world", I include, of course, such feelings as fear and despair and barrenness, as well as domestic love and delight in nature. These darker emotions may well put on the masks of quite unworldly things—such as ghosts, or trolls, or antique gods.

In other words, like any writer in control of the material Sylvia Plath used masks and manoeuvres to cope with the world. Creating illusions, making fictions, is part of the strategy. What seems to have gone largely unregarded is her comical resilience, exploiting experiences (operations, pain, suffering, blankness, fears) with a tough sardonic wit. Remember that when she first read her poem "Daddy" to A. Alvarez a few days after she had written it, his memory is that she called it a piece of "light verse." One may think that was just a defensive, self-protective ploy; and obviously it isn't "light" in the sense that Edward Lear or W. S. Gilbert or Old Possum's Practical Cats are "light." But I think one ought to take the point—and take, too, the introductory note she wrote to "Daddy" for a BBC broadcast that never took place: she said of the poem's narrator or persona, "She has to act out the awful little allegory once over before she is free of it." The words "awful" and "little" colour the interpretation, and the word "allegory" helps to define it. It is *not* a confessional splurge, a piece of let-it-all-hang-out, or a direct self-confrontation of a kind familiar in Lowell, Sexton, or Berryman: it is a way of coping with an obsession by playing with it, by making it into a game—something sophisticatedly child-like, with its insistent rhythms and rhymes, its almost nursery-rhyme-like repetitions.

IN HER SHORT BOOK on Sylvia Plath, published six years ago,[4] Eileen Aird ended her Introduction with that resonant remark by Yeats ("Out of the quarrel with ourselves we make poetry") and commented: "It seems a fitting epitaph." I'm not sure I accept it as the summation of a life and a death which an epitaph should be; but I do see the sense of it when applied to Plath's own poetry. Alongside it, one ought to consider Eliot's famous dictum about the gap there is—or he said should be—between "the man who suffers and the mind which creates." This (part of Eliot's lifelong conviction of the "impersonality" of all great poetry) may seem true enough of Eliot's own poetry but less true of Yeats and, if one were to follow some of her own commentators, not true at all of Sylvia Plath. But what measuring-system can one use to measure the gap between "the man (or woman) who suffers" and "the mind which creates"?

Re-reading all of her published poems, and reading or re-reading a mass of stuff written about her, I've been struck again and again by the dramatic *distancing* of so much of her work, the way in which she created poems which are precisely *not* cries from the heart, or from a sick mind, or from the edge of the precipice in an obtrusively narrow or personal way; and at the same time I've been struck by the way these poems are indeed quarrels

[4] Eileen Aird, *Sylvia Plath* (Oliver & Boyd, 1973).

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with herself, dramatic debates between action and stillness, fulfilment and blankness, hope and despair, anger and love—not seen in those abstract shapes, of course, but translated into that dense and sprightly metaphorical discourse which is one of the languages of poetry and which was certainly her language.

Very often it is a pictorial language, the first level of metaphor, something seen: she has the attentive detail, the high-lighted focus, of a *genre* painter. It comes out, for example, in the second part of her poem "Two Views of a Cadaver Room", in which that "little country, foolish, delicate" in the Brueghel painting is the frail and threatened place yearned for and sought—and sometimes found—in many Plath poems. Sometimes, in early poems and late ones, it is the country of Death, very still, very composed, very "accomplished"—to vary a word she used in one of the poems she wrote in the last week of her life, "Edge." Here the temptation is to read back into it one's retrospective knowledge—those accounts of how she left food and milk for her children's breakfast before she gassed herself:

Each dead child coiled, a white serpent,
One at each little

Pitcher of milk, now empty.

But Sylvia Plath, like any good poet, didn't write poems as autobiographical or proleptic footnotes. It's as absurd as to suggest that because Hart Crane wrote a great deal about the sea, *that* is why he drowned himself in the Caribbean. If literature really behaved in this way, then Hardy should have strung himself up on a gallows on Egdon Heath, or somewhere, and not allowed himself to die in bed at the age of 88.

THE PERFECTION, the accomplishment, the *necessity* of "Edge" have an inevitability which would, I think, seem just as inevitable if Sylvia Plath hadn't in fact killed herself within a week of writing it. The poem's stillness is a conscious weapon against distraction, and a stabilising one. The quarrel, for the moment, is over, resolved. That in a moment of desolation she miscalculated and pushed herself over the edge is, as I said in my previous article, in a sense irrelevant. We need to remember this, so as not to magnify the manner of her death and thereby keep on reading it back into the poems. Poets who die young seem to satisfy some gruesome necessity in the reading and legend-making public, whether they die of disease, like Keats, or by accident, like Shelley, or in war, like Wilfred Owen, or by suicide, like Chatterton and Sylvia Plath. That Dylan Thomas died of "massive insult to the brain" through drinking too

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much, at the age of 39, may perhaps seem important, a kind of resolution of that particular quarrel. But then what about George Herbert—in my opinion just as fine, indeed a finer poet—who died at exactly the same age as Thomas but in circumstances to which no legend has accreted? Herbert, too, made poems "out of the quarrel" with himself, a quarrel between (among other things) pride and privilege and ambition on the one hand and humility and self-abnegation and acceptance on the other. Poems that survive—in the sense that a number of poems by Herbert, Thomas and Plath survive and have currency—do so not because of legendary "circumstances" but because they are well-made things which extend us, enlarge us, and make us, too, survive and endure and enjoy.

IN HER *Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes*,[5] Margaret Dickie Uroff attempts to "read the work of these two major poets in a new way":

> Plath and Hughes lived together during their most creative years, read each other's poetry, and read poetry to each other . . . what critics have frequently called the pathological element in Plath's poetry comes actually from areas she explored with Hughes. . . . Hughes's development toward surrealism was clearly influenced by Plath's work.

That comparisons can be made between the two is no new thing. As I once put it[6]: "In a way, Hughes's poems are the *animus* to her *anima*—the male principle backing on to the female principle on the same coin: compare, for example, his 'Thistles' with her 'Mushrooms' "—a remark that brought a ribald laugh from Philip Larkin, and I admit the point might have been more elegantly put. Ms Uroff is by no means a sensational or Butscher-like commentator, and some of her pertinacious tracking is worth following. On the other hand, she pushes too hard to make correspondences and reversals, as if she were out to construct a beautifully proportioned graph: here she gives him that and he gives her that, here they change roles, here he is in the ascendant, etc. Remarks such as (of "Daddy"), "Whatever its source in Plath's life, its literary sources may very well be Hughes's animal poems", aren't made any more illuminating by Ms Uroff's demonstrations; and large-scale sleights-of-deity such as, "As they developed, Plath came to locate herself at the fulcrum, while Hughes stood back to explore the nature of the universe", have a touch of literary megalomania.

Still, it is a sober, sane and on the whole jargon-free book. She is sensible about "Lady Lazarus", a poem which in its notoriety and in the variety of its misreadings just about equals "Daddy." Written very directly "out of the quarrel", it sounds (and this is a measure of its dramatic success) as if it had been written just this side, or the other side, of hysteria. But the poem with which we're confronted works like that precisely *because* it is so superbly controlled and directed. It confronts private horrors, transforms them into public ones (the concentration camps)—and then has the audacity, the bad taste, the skill, to play with them:

> *Beware*
> *Beware.*
>
> *Out of the ash*
> *I rise with my red hair*
> *And I eat men like air.*

The notion of serious writers—especially, perhaps, serious women writers—playing with their obsessions, or joking about serious matters, is offensive to many people. The squeamishness of male critics confronted with the work of, say, Erica Jong has often been remarked. To justify or tidy up, such work is sterilised with the cosmetics of *black comedy, theatre of the absurd, sick humour*, etc. Sylvia Plath was a very controlled, very witty, and also very serious and ambitious writer, who had the bad luck to be born and brought up in a society which—at one and the same time—equated seriousness with solemnity and, in its more intellectual reaches, gave an odd and special status to what used to be called insanity. In a secular age, without belief but hungering for something transcendental, many felt like the natives in the Evelyn Waugh novel: "Very mad, very holy."

The society and the age of which I speak is of course our own. Sylvia Plath used it, as any artist must use his age and society. That she tried, as what American psychologists call "an over-achiever", to kill herself, haunted her and became part of her subject-matter. That she not only tried to kill herself again but actually succeeded, after she had been deserted by her husband for another woman, is not actually part of her subject-matter at all: her death naturally precluded that. In any case, many wives who were in no sense artists have suffered in the same way and have acted in the same way. What is unique about Sylvia Plath is not what happened to her and what she did to herself—the gas oven and the note to the doctor—but her control, her zest, her vitality *as a poet* up to that point. If we make her into a legend, we falsify and diminish her. In the end, we see the perfection and resolution of her own "quarrel" in the poems:

> *The heart shuts,*
> *The sea slides back,*
> *The mirrors are sheeted.*

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[5] *Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes*. By MARGARET DICKIE UROFF. University of Illinois Press, £5.60, $7.95.

[6] Anthony Thwaite, *Poetry Today 1960–73*, (Longman, for British Council, 1973).

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A Change of Landscape

New Poetry—By ALAN BROWNJOHN

HOW WRONG they were, all those critics who read the emergence of the Movement, that 1950s new wave of English poets who espoused tightness of form and tightness of lip, as a purely literary phenomenon. And how mistaken were all those later literary historians who saw Movement mistrust of extravagance, its modesty of ambition and its predilection for defensive ironies as in some way a faithful reflection of an entire social landscape: the Welfare State (the reality never existed and even the myth is now rapidly vanishing) where nothing ever went gravely wrong, nothing exciting ever happened, and drab living produced drab writing.

Both views were wide of the mark, and the truth was far simpler: with the wisdom of hindsight we can now fairly safely say that the tone of the new English poetry of the 1950s came largely out of an unusually marked tension between the world of action and the world of the imagination. "How can I dare to feel?", Donald Davie's often-quoted response to Donne's "Alas, alas, who's injur'd by my love?", should not have been foisted on the Movement by its critics as a damaging slogan. Donne's "Love sometimes would contemplate, sometimes do" would have been a much more apposite choice.

In the early years of the decade, the Second World War, service in the armed forces, and the National Service which followed were much closer presences than most critics saw at the time and almost any critic has understood since. If the new poetry came largely out of academe (six of the eight poets in the Movement anthology, *New Lines*, were academics, two were librarians, one worked in the Foreign Office), it was an academe which sheltered a whole generation unable to settle comfortably for the security of traditional academic values, and distantly fascinated by the world outside. Some literary academics found a rigour they could enjoy in the strenuous critical procedures of a Richards or a Leavis; so the poetry they wrote had to be invulnerable to practical criticism as well as to accusations of wetness. (Sometimes the quest for rigour finished in a near-contempt for poetry itself, and an increasing envy of the world of action where men gambled at cards, or played football—or at least reported matches.) If the cinema seemed outside their range, and television irrelevant as yet, if the world of popular music seemed beneath their contempt (a later generation was to change all that), then the novel afforded an acceptable means of showing muscle—even literally, because "Movement" fiction offered a violence of emotion, and sometimes of action, which was altogether absent from Movement poetry. Politics, and some mild forms of social action (writing a Fabian pamphlet, raising a banner against capital punishment, lining the route to Aldermaston) were also currently acceptable; but not to be taken too far.

But what could scarcely be disputed, even while its supporters were protesting that the Movement was *new*, was that it was essentially *conservative* in character. If the literary conservatism was easy to notice, the stronger underlying social conservatism which derived from experiencing or imposing structures of authority and simple rules of behaviour in military set-ups was harder to detect, and took longer to emerge in its true colours. Again, the wisdom of hindsight has to be invoked. It should have been possible to see at the time (but one didn't, all the same) that the characteristic Movement way of worrying about the discrepancy between dreams and reality (tight-lipped, apologetic), of agonising about whether one stood comparison with the man of action if one was a *poet*, went with a distinct annoyance at finding that life, love and the ravages of time were more complicated things than they looked in the officers' mess. Its mistrust of sensitivity, mistrust of experiment, mistrust of artifice—mistrust of *art*—linked the Movement with the philistinism of good old conservative Middle England. And lately we have heard that dullest of all political noises: the thunder of mild rebels going down on middle-aged knees to repent of little indiscretions.

KINGSLEY AMIS's *Collected Poems*,[1] which are arranged in a very exact chronological order, provides, apart from anything else (and the "anything else" includes pleasures as well as regrets) an interesting graph of one Movement poet's progress. In the early pages, feeling—not only emotion, but the feeling for actual, untidy, complicated human predicaments—tends to get hidden behind allegory, or muffled in abstraction.

The move into academe seems to have two

[1] *Collected Poems 1944–79*. By KINGSLEY AMIS. Hutchinson, £4.95.

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effects: an increasing technical confidence and a clearer elaboration of some characteristic themes. What is "real"—quite a frequent word at this stage—is pretty unnerving: a "soiled sheet" replaces the homely quilt of childhood, the real world can't be like the dream world of erotic fantasies, life is a case of "real defeats." "Literary" attitudes are suspect ("Here is Where") and the consolations of art and learning ("polished sets of symbols" or "the heavenly garden-fete/Where the immortals walk") are deceiving or boring. A colloquial ease and straightforwardness come in; so does a note of genuine vulnerability. The sense of the gulf between contemplating and doing is strongest by the time we reach "A Song of Experience", the one about the pub party who gather round the randy commercial traveller. Here Amis approaches the dilemma with splendid bawdiness:

He tried all colours, white and black and coffee;
Though quite a few were chary, more were bold;
Some took it like the Host, some like toffee;
The two or three who wept were soon consoled.

But soon, the envy of the action is very clear:

The inaccessible he laid a hand on,
The heated he refreshed, the cold he warmed.
What Blake presaged, what Lawrence took a stand on,
What Yeats locked up in a fable, he performed.

The main trouble about this is not that it is rather misleading (Lawrence and Yeats "performed" quite well, one would have thought; as well as in writing) but its curious demotion—more than faintly philistine—of the world of literature. I would have thought that Keats in his youth and Hopkins in his celibacy could knock spots off Amis's traveller in their knowledge of "the human heart." And the way a reverence for literature keeps creeping in just doesn't strike Amis: in the aestheticism of "On Staying Still"; or the way "Nothing to Fear" recreates, in the repeatedly self-justifying voice of the philanderer, the pattern of George Herbert's "The Collar":

What about guilt, compunction and such stuff?
I've had my fill of all that cock;
It'll wear off, as usual. . . .

Beauty, they tell me, is a dangerous thing,
Whose touch will burn, but I'm asbestos, see?

—except that death, not God, is breathing down Amis's neck.

STILL, BY THE END of the Swansea period, we are in "The Evans Country", where the most familiar Amis persona has full sway: this is the (just a little more than) averagely sensual man who can order love as cheerfully as he can order butter, make reality match dreams by working an efficient timetable ("6.30 . . . A fearsome thrash with Mrs No-holds-barred . . . Back at the wheel 6.50, breathing hard") and make passes despite his glasses. But the end of contemplation and the beginning of action is, after this batch of adroitly wicked and strangely tender poems, the point where the later Amis starts: bluff, stand-offish, opinionated, and uncharitable. Only the past is to be valued; occasionally with tenderness, and a case made out for what it had, as in "Farewell Blues":

Dead's the note we loved that swelled within us,
made us gasp and stare,
Simple joy and simple sadness thrashing the astounded air;
What replaced them no one asked for, but it turned up anyhow,
And Coleman Hawkins, Johnny Hodges, Bessie Smith and Pee Wee Russell lie in Okeh churchyard now.

—but more often with a different sort of nostalgia, as in "Reunion":

Then farmyards and cobbled roads
Full of sun, fresh fruit, village wells,
Tents pitched in the leaf-strewn woods,
Slow crossing of iced-up canals,
Those seasons, that mutable scene
Trodden through in the end—all that,
Plus litres of lager and wine
And a sniff or so at the frat.

Insipid lyricism about the war landscape, the literary bit ("mutable scene"), the slang to blur the issue—no, thank-you.

In the early days Amis wrote a much-praised love poem called "Masters" which not only stands up marvellously in itself but anticipates most of what is best in his later verse:

The eyes that will not look, the twitching cheek,
The hands that sketch what mouth would fear to own,
Only these make us known, and we are known
Only as we are weak:

By yielding mastery the will is freed,
For it is by surrender that we live,
And we are taken if we wish to give,
Are needed if we need.

Completely assured in form, balancing "public" and "private" images with immense skill and appositeness, finding its way to truths of some subtlety and compassion, it shows in a very poignant way all that the early Amis was too hesitant to develop and the later Amis has been too curmudgeonly to bother with. Between the two, we find much fun and outrageousness, a few shafts of

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light on the foibles of the human heart ("Nerves" and "Autobiographical Fragment" are especially good) and some sturdy no-nonsense humanism which always comes in useful. The essentially vulnerable Amis of "Masters" surfaces in poems as poised and gentle (and unexpected) as "The Two Purses", "A Point of Logic", and "Wasted." Sadly, the more usual Amis has never shaken off the old burden of Movement attitudes with their roots deep in the English abhorrence of any seriousness that has to do with art.

REMAINS OF ELMET,[2] Ted Hughes' new volume of verse about the ravaged natural and industrial wilderness of the Calder Valley in Yorkshire, is most likely to be reviewed in respect of the poems; so more than a word might be said at the start about the photographs which set the poet writing. Wherever she has gone, on the moors, or down among the shattered mills and canals of Calderdale, Fay Godwin has caught the icy, brooding quality of this landscape with astonishing skill. Her eye for the rapid capture of objects—rocks, luminous pools, drystone walls in oppressive or changing light—which might prove obstinate to pin down is especially remarkable: again and again, people, buildings and sheep seem to present or juxtapose themselves as if *they* instead of the photographer sensed exactly what the camera wanted. The pictures provide a superb gift to the poet, and Ted Hughes has taken it eagerly.

The poems all derive from the photographs, but are not all directly from the visual images; some are variations on themes suggested by the pictures. This procedure has the virtue of keeping photographs and poems somewhat apart, in no way reliant on each other in a system of cross references: both could stand entirely by themselves, there being no attempt at an artificial fusion of the two art forms. Presumably no attempt at a "narrative" sequence was made either, since the book moves several times into and out of the same areas of country and township, apparently at random. I think an opportunity was missed here to give the sequence a unity and tension it tends to lack, even with an introductory poem set at the beginning and an apocalyptic vision ("The full moon had crashed on to Halifax") at the end. The disadvantage of this method of presentation is that it suggests a repetition which the poems in fact do not contain.

Starting from the photographs has had the effect of focusing the poet's eye—in most instances—on very concrete, specific objects from which he can then diverge, in space or time. This is all to the good after the procedure of *Cave Birds*, published last year, where Leonard Baskin's bravura draw-

[2] *Remains of Elmet*. By TED HUGHES. Photographs by FAY GODWIN. Faber, £7.95, paper £3.95.

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ings of nightmare fowl encouraged Hughes to start from fantasy and lift away into rhetoric. In *Remains of Elmet* he may keep strictly to the dirty sheep staring up from a snowy field, "The Sluttiest Sheep in England"

that never
Get their back ends docked. Who
Doctors their wormy coughs? Maggots
Bring them down in quarry dead ends
And the fluke reigns.

They get by
On the hill-subsidy.

Or he may use the photograph of a "bareback of hill" to start an exuberant yet earthy poem on "Football at Slack":

The blown ball jumped, and the merry-coloured men
Spouted like water to head it.
The ball blew away downwind—

The rubbery men bounced after it.
The ball jumped up and out and hung on the wind
Over a gulf of treetops.
Then they all shouted together, and the ball blew back.

Exuberance, with the landscape and with Fay Godwin's portrayal of it, is the keynote of the volume, as if the poet had worked with the same impromptu speed and skill as the photographer, reacting instantly to the images laid before him. The result is Hughes' most impressive work since *Crow* and his most approachable volume for a lot longer than that. All the same, a more literal attempt to follow the programme hinted at in his introduction, tracing the death of "the mills of the region and their attendant chapels" and studying the character of the change overtaking the valley, might have provided a different challenge and a new departure: Hughes and Godwin among the denim shops and minimarkets of Hebden Bridge and Todmorden as well as among the gravestones and curlews.

PETE MORGAN'S *The Spring Collection*[3] follows some six years after his first book, *The Grey Mare Being the Better Steed*: he is a slower, more selective writer than his often easygoing manner suggests, and an apparent relaxation and fluency has been carefully worked for. Morgan stands at a point where ballad, surrealism, concrete, and more conventional modes of writing seem to converge—there is something of Causley, something of George Barker, a little of George MacBeth. But he has his own distinctive trademarks, including a kind of ironical decorum, and archaism of diction; as in "The Balloon Poem":

The balloon's ambition
is specific.
It does not breed
and neither does it sing.

The balloon does not confront
its enemies
neither does it confound its friends.
The balloon does not seek recompense
neither does it foster ill will.

With this new volume it has all shaken down into a very individual, easily recognisable style which can accommodate a wide variety of moods and subjects: the lyrical, the grave, poems of love, humour, protest and nightmare. There is a slightly riddling, arcane quality about some of the pieces, which hint at more than they want to say outright; but one catches on to the tone without too much difficulty in most of them the "Complaint of the Post-apprentice Weaver" mocks with some elegance at all pretension, especially artistic pretension:

Now every man's a weaver who can't weave.
And me? A weaver—
post-apprenticeship and now post-trade—
watch rogues and upstarts at it.

How they are heralded and praised
for taking scissors to thin air

And "RIP" approaches age (or at least middle-age) with a balance of surprise, defiance and sexual nostalgia:

I shall be going—
roistering and loud,
white-headed, bloody-minded and unbowed.
I shall be off, without the niceties,
but with such flailing
all the weak make way . . .

My gun was good.
My aim was true.
The barrel levelled, steady,
and the smoke hung, for an instant,
Blue.

The confident handling of a variety of devices and forms—ballad, epigram ("Beware of the woman who says fuck—/she will scream *rape rape*") and even villanelle—suggests a poet who has now put behind him the temptations of an undemanding "platform" style—if he ever felt seriously seduced by them.

[3] *The Spring Collection*. By PETE MORGAN. Secker & Warburg, £3.50.

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THERE HAS BEEN a quiet serendipity about Fleur Adcock's poetry in its more conventional moments: a casual, often very appealing, yet curiously unambitious assembling of sensations and observations. Then suddenly something angry, or nightmarish, or discomfiting leaps out—poems like "Against Coupling" in *High Tide in the Garden* or "Feverish" in *The Scenic Route*—and she seems almost another writer. The surprises in her new book, *The Inner Harbour*[4], are not only in mood or subject, but in form. If her most resonant and moving poems here are not the poems of returning to New Zealand in the title-sequence and elsewhere but the recollections of the dead in "Letter from Highgate Wood" and the poignant observations of sickness in "The Soho Hospital for Women", the most unexpected and promising departures come in poems of a formal adroitness which she has rarely tried. It's there in "A Way Out" (a little reminiscent of Richard Wilbur in its lyrical excursions, but none the worse for it): birds

use the air
to sail as we might soaring on a swing
higher and higher; but the rope's not there,

it's free fall upward, out into the sky;
or if the arc veer downward, then it's planned:
a bird can loiter, skimming just as high
as lets him supervise the hazel copse,
the turnip field, the orchard, and then land
on just the twig he's chosen.

And it's certainly there in "Proposal for a Survey", which maps out "Poets' England" with a kind of Byronic impudence:

Aerial photogrammetry's the thing . . .

The lens, of course, will not discriminate
between the venerable and the new;
Stonehenge and Avebury may catch the eye
but Liverpool will have its aura too.
As well as Canterbury there'll be Leeds
and Hull criss-crossed with nets of glittering
beads.

Pressing small, rather unlikely objects into ominous or intriguing service—here, rubber-seeds, a "carved spoon broken in its case", a "round baby sparrow/modelled in feather-coloured clay"—is one of her ways of lifting a fairly slow-paced lyricism into vividness. She does it well; but soaring higher in planned patterns of flight seems to be working out as well.

EDWIN BROCK USED TO BE one of the most concrete and approachable of poets: ruefully

[4] *The Inner Harbour*. By FLEUR ADCOCK. Oxford University Press, £2.75.

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Books & Issues is a new interdisciplinary quarterly review of books by university, academic and literary presses. Vol. I No. 1 includes articles by Kathleen Nott, David Holbrook, Roy Porter, John Lucas, Gordon M. Pradl, Mary Garvey, Elizabeth Watson Macpherson, Aidan Coen, Denise Watson, Stephen Trombley, and poetry by J. C. Hall.

Vol. I No. 2 will be a special issue on sociobiology and will feature a long article by Pulitzer Prize winner William McPherson, and an excerpt from E. W. F. Tomlin's forthcoming book, *The Concept of Life*.

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accurate and entertaining vignettes of love, family life, work. Too approachable, even predictable, he thought: so the wry, clear messages of "Five Ways to Kill a Man" and "The Song of the Battery Hen" were deliberately left behind, the city was exchanged for the country, carnal love and all its failings were joined by spiritual love and the necessity to grope for what it is all about:

There is a Grandma Moses cow
across the road: black and white
with a kind of gingham antimacassar
draped on her back.

I want this cow in a green surround
framed upon my wall: not exactly
as I see her now but in a way
I cannot see her because of my
bad relationship with God

which is something I can't explain

But *The River and the Train*[5] doesn't often vouchsafe this relative lucidity of argument, and Brock is now become an increasingly oblique and "difficult" poet. I cannot follow his title-poem, and the poems about people ("The death of mice and the pain of men", "The way the moon breaks") are now often cryptic instead of frank and vulnerable.

I think he has achieved what he seeks with such honesty and baffled patience where the old self fits most comfortably into the new landscape, or the new concerns add another dimension to the old picture. A love poem like "Enough is enough" is an example of the first; and "The possibilities", a poem of love, and nostalgia for what did *not* happen in the past, is a better example of the second:

Sometimes I feel when we lie down together
our dreams tread over two small wheels
which never touch: that we are not part
of the same machinery. Or that we stand
on the edge of a landscape we did not cross
because we did not say the word or said it
and it was not heard.

IT IS VERY GOOD to find Donald Hall in *Kicking the Leaves*[6] returning wholeheartedly to a landscape—the New Hampshire farm country—from which he has periodically drawn some of his best poems. I had strong reservations about his Selected Poems of 1975, *A Blue Wing Tilts at the Edge of the Sea*: he seemed to have been going for easy options (half-lyrical, half joky) for much too long. This new, albeit shortish, collection sees him back in much better form. The subject of food (in the spring an old man's fancy, as Cyril Connolly remarked) sets him going with some gusto, whether in a found

[5] *The River and the Train*. By EDWIN BROCK. Secker & Warburg, £3.50.
[6] *Kicking the Leaves*. By DONALD HALL. Secker & Warburg, £3.50.

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poem about trappers trapping and devouring a wolf ("Wolf Knife"), or in his apostrophe to cheese—

Reblochon openly sexual; Caerphilly like pine trees, small
at the timberline; Port du Salut in love; Caprice des Dieux
eloquent, tactful, like a thousand-year-old hostess
O Cheese

—or in his poem of extraordinary ritual about the consumption of a whole pig by twelve people at an Ann Arbor supper. The poems of recollection of dead relatives and neighbours order their richness of recall with an unobtrusive skill which one had begun to feel he had lost.

Operatic Surface, Deep Politics

Recent Fiction—By TOM PAULIN

EVEN THE MOST POLITICALLY interested artist must sometimes feel a healthy boredom with politics. In this late decade there is a spirit of reaction against the libertarian ideas of the '60s, and although this takes various pitiless and terrible forms—Islamic fanaticism, punk rock, mad monetarism, electrocution in Florida—there is another and dissociated way in which radical political commitment can be avoided without a reactionary emphasis. It's a problem which Henry James explored in that great novel of the 1880s, *The Princess Casamassima,* and in her new and superb fiction Nadine Gordimer introduces certain Jamesian moments which work against the political involvement of her earlier writing. It's a most difficult question, this old familiar choice between politics and aesthetic freedom, and it informs *Burger's Daughter*[1] in a quite tantalising manner.

In totalitarian societies politics shrill everywhere, while in a liberal democracy one can afford to be apolitical. How curious, then, that Rosemarie Burger, a "named person" in the jargon of the South African authorities, should wish to distance herself from the tradition of radical political commitment she was born into. She is named for her Afrikaaner grandmother, Marie Burger, and also for Rosa Luxemburg. It's an impossible destiny which twists her in contrary directions. She is caught between Lionel Burger's faith in revolutionary mass movement and the claim of her grandmother's descendants to "that order of life, secure in the sanctions of family, church, law—and all these contained in the ultimate sanction of colour, that was maintained without question on the domain, dorp and farm, where she lay." If it seems extraordinary that a Nadine Gordimer heroine should even for one moment consider *that* particular claim, then I have only to consider the case of a radical northern Protestant who believes in a united Ireland with a strong labour movement. How impossible that belief is once it's set against practical political reality, and if you pursue that conflict far enough you will discover how disturbingly close are the similarities between the Afrikaaners and the Ulster Protestants. Short of a total rejection of political awareness—a complete and dedicated aestheticism—one always belongs to some ancestral society, and this view is endorsed by Nadine Gordimer's pessimism about the future of joint political action.

As a young girl, Rosa wonders if the blacks "are grateful to whites who endanger their lives for them", and towards the end we watch the young demonstrators in Soweto turning on white and black liberals alike. In this confrontation both revolutionary Marxism and middle-class liberalism are rejected and the white radicals appear irrelevant to a historical process which allows neither compromise nor Lionel Burger's belief in a "covenant . . . with the victims of apartheid." The students in Soweto have no reason to be grateful and the centre is squeezed between two nationalisms.

Towards the end of the novel there is a scene—it is passionate, tragic and devastating—where Baasie phones Rosa in the dead hours before dawn. He is a young black who lived as her adopted brother in the Burger family, and he is now an émigré revolutionary. He rebukes her for what he believes is her patronising liberalism and for her pride in her father, a famous revolutionary martyr whose great speech from the dock dominates the early pages of the story. Baasie insists that Rosa calls him by his revolutionary name, Zwelinzima Vulindlela, which means "Suffering Land", and their personal argument becomes a political confrontation between their opposite nationalisms (she is a Boer, a Burger, and her Marxist background is irrelevant). And then he starts to destroy the natural bond between them, a bond that may anyway be impossible and sentimental:

"Everyone in the world must be told what a

[1] *Burger's Daughter.* By NADINE GORDIMER, Jonathan Cape, £5.95.

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> great hero he was and how much he suffered for the blacks. Everyone must cry over him and show his life on television and write in the papers. Listen, there are dozens of our fathers sick and dying like dogs, kicked out of the locations when they can't work any more. Getting old and dying in prison. Killed in prison. It's nothing. I know plenty blacks like Burger. It's nothing, it's us, we must be used to it, it's not going to show on English television."

"I'm not your Baasie", he tells Rosa; "I'm not your black 'brother'." Both seared by politics and utterly alien now, they shout desperately at each other until they reach the position which the "history books back home have had ready for us—him bitter; me guilty."

This episode is like a scene from *Lear*—it has a tragic pitch and intensity as the bonds between them snap. It's the work of a truly great writer and its suffering reality is very hard to bear. A glance at the secret, subtle meeting between Liz van den Sandt and the black radical, Luke Fokaze, in *The Late Bourgeois World,* will show how much Nadine Gordimer's vision has darkened in the last twelve years. The spectacle of love and private tenderness crucified by racial politics is deeply upsetting, and it would be utterly wrong to view this tragic moment as a stage in a developing process. To subordinate the transcendent is to extinguish pity.

When Rosa sees a tramp die on a park bench, she asks "what had all the certainties I had from my father to do with that?" And as she meditates on the change from life to death her political certainties tremble and vanish:

> I was left with that. It had been left out. Justice, equality, the brotherhood of man, human dignity—but *it will still be there,* I looked away everywhere from the bench and saw it still, when—at last—I had seen it once.

She thinks of her parents filing past Lenin's tomb, of every November filing past the date of her father's death, and she concludes: "On the park bench there was also a lying-in-state."

THE POLITICS OF NATURE are inevitably conservative, but essentially Rosa is questioning the relationship of any political creed to the currents of life itself. Opinions are a curse—they eat out the soul and substitute for it a hard embittered righteousness which distorts personal relationships, is philistine in its attitude to art, and which twists the life of the spirit into mere secular relevance. At such times a mystical quietism or a careless aestheticism must abscond from the pressures of commitment. This desire to be released from responsibility informs Rosa's decision to go on holiday to Europe. In order to acquire the passport which has previously been denied her she seeks the patronage of a liberal Afrikaaner Nationalist (i.e. a sophisticated supporter of Vorster), and here I feel that Nadine Gordimer sidesteps the issues of guilt and collusion which are necessarily implicit in Rosa's secret meeting with Brandt Vermeulen—they are, after all, another version of Liz van den Sandt's secret meeting with Luke Fokase. In Rosa's wish simply "to go somewhere else", there can be nothing simple—it is a political decision, even though she escapes into a delightful world of operatic surface, sun-dazzle and French cooking. But she has come to see that it is a "sickness *not* [my italics] to be able to ignore that condition of a healthy, ordinary life: other people's suffering." In the context of political reality such a view can be termed selfish and reactionary, but abstract it from that context and it is healthy.

This view finds expression in a wonderful prose-poem on the tapestries in the Musée de Cluny—an intense and finely wrought piece of aestheticism which is juxtaposed with a bitter and powerful pamphlet issued by the Soweto Students Representative Council: "Black people of Azania remember our beloved dead!" Remarkably, Nadine Gordimer allows both extremes to exist within the novel, though when Rosa is finally imprisoned without trial it is possible to detect a paradoxical solution: she enjoys her punishment and consents to its necessity. In prison she finds a society where she is accepted (it is curiously like the society she discovers in the South of France), and her sense of freedom is reminiscent of the end of *The First Circle* where Innokenty Volodin discovers an inner freedom in the Lubyanka. As a solution which implicitly alludes to Solzhenitsyn, this is infinitely complex and ironic.

Though there are diffuse chapters in this novel, and although Rosa Burger is sometimes blurred in her untouchable privacy, this is such a rich, magnificent and passionately intelligent work of art that it would be absurd to quibble here and there. Those parallels with George Eliot which *A Guest of Honour* first suggested are established absolutely by this great novel.

STILL IN AFRICA, imagine a desert in the north where the sun burns down on a solitary bedouin by a grove of date palms, a crate of Coca-Cola, *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, a silo of Russian missiles. John Updike's new novel, *The Coup*,[2] shimmers brilliantly in such a bizarre imaginative territory. The country is called Kush and its president, Colonel Felix Ellelloû, is an Islamic-Marxist with a bitter hatred of Western

[2] *The Coup*. By JOHN UPDIKE. André Deutsch, £4.95.

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values. He detests America, "that fountainhead of obscenity and glut", and he praises the "delicate, delectable emptiness" of Kush:

> I say, the Sahara was once altogether green, and the Merciful bestowed upon it a superior beauty, the beauty of the minimal, the changeless, the unpolluted, the necessary.

And like Wallace Stevens's Snow Man, this sensual autocrat also possesses an austere and wintry imagination which beholds "nothing that is not there and the nothing that is." The land of Kush is cursed by Felix's hatred of the world, and as he moves incognito among his people, visiting each of his four estranged wives, Felix denounces the polluting influences of American and Russian imperialism: nomadic grazing patterns disrupted by deep wells drilled by foreigners, a plague of bilharzia-infested snails caused by a new dam. Felix's puritanical idealism is contrasted with the wisdom of the corrupt king he deposed and whom he visits in prison. Obeying his ambitious mistress, Kutunda, Felix decides to behead the wrinkled old despot and his account of the execution is comic and grotesque: the fatalism of the desert cannot admit either pity or horror.

The same is true of the scene where Felix immolates a young American Peace Corps officer on a stack of junk food. Updike is able simultaneously to direct a ferocious scorn at American capitalism and naive liberalism, and to explore the vindictive nature of the Islamic religion. His sure historical perspective ripples through Felix's reminiscences of his life as a student at McCarthy College, Wisconsin, and the middle-America of the 1950s contrasts with the seething global politics of the 1970s. Felix's brash American wife, Candy, denounces him as "the most narcissistic, chauvinistic, megalomaniacal, catatonic shizoid creep this creepy continent ever conjured up", and yet his fierce rectitude is presented so sympathetically that Felix seems a tortured Manichee trapped in a noble dream of an impossible perfection. He is lost in the centre of a "great transparent orb of responsibility" and his savage and fanatical innocence makes him a figure of single-minded purity.

In a world of cynical politics and consumer durables, Felix clings to the ideas of "nationhood, purity and hatred" which he learnt from the Black Muslim Oscar X, during his stay in America. Like that of Rosa Burger, his story is intensely topical and at the same time it is a dream-like tapestry which presents reality as a series of bright and glossy surfaces which might find an alternative expression in the casually-flicked pages of a Sunday colour supplement. Thus reality is the supreme fiction—a dreamy momentum no one can check or alter. The warm lapping eroticism, the hedonistic aestheticism, of Updike's prose is moral

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in its witty recognition of how fashion and the historical process are synonymous nowadays—what we advertise and consume is both thing and idea (Coca-Cola *is* an ideology). And however much Updike's style delights in its own brilliance, his presentation of Felix suggests a hunger for a belief that will transcend lush sensations. Yet sensations can be merciful, while Felix's morality is dangerous and unrealistic—he is a Gaddafi-figure who is only prevented from subsidising international terrorism by the poverty of his country.

ONE OF THE CAUSES of that poverty is the American "orgy of jogging, tennis and other narcissistic exercises" which has rejected peanut butter and so destroyed Kush's profitable export trade: calorie-controlled diets in the West cause starvation in the deserts of Kush. The range of Updike's imagination is extraordinary, and there is a particularly brilliant episode towards the end of *The Coup* where Felix discovers an American drug-store near an oil well in the middle of the Sahara. It's as though Colonel Sanders, the Emperor of finger-licking chicken, has sprouted up in "this doomed suburb of nothingness." Felix denounces oil, the "unclean interloper", and in a magnificent speech he confronts a universe of voracious and perverse consumption:

> "What does the capitalist infidel make, you may ask, of the priceless black blood of Kush? He extracts from it, of course, a fuel that propels him and his overweight, quarrelsome family—so full of sugar and starch their faces fester—back and forth on purposeless errands and ungratefully received visits. Rather than live as we do in the same village with our kin and our labour, the Americans have flung themselves wide across the land, which they have buried under tar and stone. They consume our blood also in their factories and skyscrapers, which are ablaze with light throughout the night and as hot as noon in the Depression of Hulūl! My people: in my travels, undertaken only for love of you, that I may better bear my burdens, I have visited this country of devils and can report that they make from your sacred blood slippery green bags in which they place their garbage and even the leaves that fall from their trees! They make of petroleum toys that break in their children's hands, and hair curlers in which their obese brides fatuously think to beautify themselves while they parade in supermarkets buying food wrapped in transparent petroleum and grown from fertilizers based upon your blood!"

This is both a political speech and a symbolist poem, and it's a measure of Updike's genius that he can so combine a relevant idea with protean self-delight. And although most of the characters seem

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like colourful transfers, his stylish intelligence is triumphantly sustained throughout. At times, he spins a series of dazzling clichés which momentarily drop his prose into self-parody: at dusk "an advance scout of the starry armies trembled like a pearl suspended in a gigantic crystalline goblet of heavenly nectar." Dramatic action, too, is a strangely slow-motion, underwater affair—the execution of the King, the coup which eventually overthrows Felix, seem like dazed and static designs in this fictional arabesque. But Updike's imaginative magnificence effortlessly transcends these small complaints. *The Coup* is the finale of apearances, and when Felix, the savage godhead of the desert, departs into exile in the South of France, we are left hoping for the shabby complexities and decent mercies of a mixed economy. In the end, politics and aestheticism become metaphors for each other, so that this fine novel is eventually a parable of the imagination as usurper, autocrat and failure.

COMPELLING CLAIMS have been advanced recently for Joseph Heller's second novel, *Something Happened*, but in my view *Catch-22* remains his masterpiece, (to be really mean I'd say the first hundred pages). His new novel, *Good as Gold*,[3] is essentially a re-write of *Something Happened*, and its central character, Bruce Gold, is an academic version of Bob Slocum. Gold has a contract to write a book on the Jewish experience in America and he resents those "purposeless errands and ungratefully received visits" that Updike mentions. Gold fails to understand that all families look grotesque from the inside, nor does he realise the better aspects of family life. Sometimes, Heller wittily catches a moment of idiosyncratic annoyance:

> Encouraged and accompanied by Gussie, Gold's father would move after dinner to the television set in whatever home he had decided to be driven to that evening and begin watching old movies with the energetic vigilance of a custodian of dead souls. The movies themselves made no difference. The responsibility for keeping score was only his.
>
> "That one's gone", he would shout elatedly like the grim reaper himself, as though collaring another trophy for his collection.

The novel is written with a splendidly garrulous and energetic fluency, and despite its subject it never thickens into the windy postures of Bellow's prose. But it would be quite wrong to regard it as a study

[3] *Good As Gold*. By JOSEPH HELLER. Jonathan Cape, £4.95.

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of middle-aged *angst* and hysteria. Like Bob Slocum, Gold is actually a happy and fulfilled character who for some reason is pretending to be sour, cynical and neurotic. It's as though Heller—who is apparently a joyous and monogamous fellow—is attempting to explore a condition which he's unable to believe in.

Gold and Slocum are both happily married men who have numerous fantastic affairs on the grounds that they don't love their wives. Actually they do, but they kid themselves that they don't, and this makes for staggering contradictions. A novel in which a miserable central character pretends to himself and the reader that he is tremendously happy and successful would make an effectively self-deluding fiction, but the Diary of a Somebody who masquerades as a Nobody seems absurd and unsatisfying. Heller's high spirits and innocent glee bounce through the story again and again, and this is one reason why Gold's obsessive hatred of Henry Kissinger is unconvincing. Heller may well feel a decent outrage at Kissinger's mastery of *realpolitik*, but he can't help admiring his cheeky style, a style he shares with the benignly Faustian Gold. Nowhere in the novel is there a radically subversive joke which compares with Lenny Bruce's jump from a hotel balcony (he shouted "Super-Jew!" as he fell), and I'm at a loss to understand what's funny about this comic exchange:

> . . . Harry Rosenblatt continued in a softer tone with a kind of confiding geniality, "I used to be Jewish, you know."
>
> "I used to be a hunchback."
>
> "Isn't it amazing", exclaimed Rosenblatt in a glad cry, "how we've both been able to change!"

This compares badly with the great moments of nihilistic comedy in *Catch-22*, and although Heller has excellent reasons to be proud of his achievement in that novel his later work strikes me as the nicest kind of euphoria pretending to clothe itself in the sackcloth and ashes of an unconvincing black comedy.

AT HER BEST Alison Lurie is a viciously witty writer. Her weakness—and this was clear in the later chapters of *The War Between The Tates*—is to move from an incisive subtlety into the blunter modes of knockabout comedy and farce. It's as though her delicate two inches of ivory becomes the flat and clumsy surface of a cartoon. *The War Between The Tates* is a fine and remarkable achievement, however, and there is a passage in her most recent novel, *Only Children*,[4] which examines sexual relationships with a similar honesty and originality.

A young girl called Mary Ann watches her parents flirt and quarrel with another couple during a hot tense weekend in New York State. The adults behave like children and yet they are distinguished from their children by the mysterious word "love" which makes them "hurt themselves and other people too." Mary Ann forms the belief that love is a disease like mumps and chickenpox, "only it lasted longer", and she sets out to examine its nature:

> It is like, as near as she can understand it, as if you were very hungry, practically starving, but there was only one single food in the whole wide world you could eat. For instance raspberry jello, and you could only even eat raspberry jello if this single person fed it to you spoonful by spoonful, like a baby in a high chair. So naturally you would be hungry most of the time, and you would do practically anything to keep that person around and get them to feed you their jello. If you were stronger than them you would shout at them and hang on to them, and if you were weaker you would run up and down stairs to get their sweaters and give them all your allowance and toys and do anything they wanted, just to get a couple of spoonfuls once in a while.

[4] *Only Children*. By ALISON LURIE. Heinemann, £4.50.

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The wry cold clarity of this paragraph works beautifully as a comment on adult behaviour and it also catches a decisive moment in Mary Ann's development—perhaps it is a moment of arrest when she decides that in all the years of adolescence and maturity that lie ahead of her she will never catch "the disease of love."

It's a Jamesian subject, and inevitably *What Maisie Knew* sometimes throws a discomforting shadow over Alison Lurie's story of watchful lonely children and silly parents. The personalities of the adults are strongly presented, but with a comic-strip obviousness that often reads like mimicry. It's as if Honey, Mary Ann's mother, is modelled on a real-life Southern belle who has been rather too crudely distorted. Partly because *Only Children* is set in the past—during the Depression—the narrative is dominated by received images which make the prose read as though it's written in hazy block capitals. However, this mock simplicity is one of the effects of the novel's main narrative method, that of a children's story told by Mary Ann.

Reading this description I feel not the freshness of a new recognition, but the slightly jaded sense of glancing at a flat scenario based on several of Edward Hopper's paintings:

> A dusty, sun-blanched, weed-bordered country road; rippling hayfields rising to a wood on one side; on the other broken stone walls and neglected pastureland falling away towards the valley. In a shimmer of heat a solitary car, a Franklin, appeared round the bend . . . .

Hopper is a great artist and his vision of America has such ascendancy that it's impossible not to see that country in his terms, but Lurie is relying too heavily on a received image in this passage and the result is that phrases like "neglected pastureland", "shimmer of heat", "a solitary car", seem ready-made and static. And yet there are casually witty remarks, as when Anna rebuffs her ex-lover, Dan, and advises him to have an affair with some pretty girl in his office: "She suggested this in the good-natured, slightly impatient manner in which she might have advised a small child found digging up the Eastwind flowerbeds that he would have more fun in the sandbox." Here and elsewhere in the story, Lurie endorses Updike's remark in *The Coup* that "a man, in America, is a failed boy."

THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM isn't conspicuous on any tourist map of England, but if Muriel Spark intends to contrast its ugly banality with the intrigues of Venice then something is badly wrong with her presentation of Italy.[5] While Robert Leaver and his father get involved with various oddities in Venice, Mrs Anthea Leaver sits jealously in a Birmingham suburb reading a novel about a boring couple called Matt and Joyce. Her novel is meant to be boring—"She looked at the damp clothes and found no significance in them"—but unfortunately Muriel Spark's novel is also written in a drab and lacklustre prose. A paragraph which begins "A Venetian funeral is intended not to be missed" sounds dreary and unpromising. And when a sick joke misfires—as several do in this novel—nothing can save the narrative from disaster. The story is clumsily told and the last chapter is merely a catalogue of departures. This artistic carelessness can be seen in this representative passage:

> Grace Gregory had been matron at Ambrose College up till a few months ago when she retired. She had taken with her into retirement a boy, now eighteen, who had spent his schooldays at Ambrose College. He was lodging with her while working at his first job in a travel agency, being good at languages.
>
> "I mustn't stay, or my young lodger Leo won't have his supper", said Grace.
>
> "I've got to talk to someone", Anthea said. "Can't you ring him up and say you'll be late?"
>
> "He gives me such laundry problems", Grace said. "And you should see him eat."

That stumbling addition, "being good at languages", makes Leo's brief biography sound like a school report. The fact that he is Grace's lodger is unnecessarily repeated in the next sentence, while the "laundry problems" he gives Grace make him sound as though he's still in nappies. The conversation of the other characters in Venice is just as humdrum as that of Grace and Anthea in Brum, and the result is a thin and mediocre fantasy.

SUSAN SONTAG'S STORIES, *I, Etcetera*,[6] read like jottings in a commonplace book. Sometimes

[5] *Territorial Rights*. By MURIEL SPARK. Macmillan, £5.95.

[6] *I, Etcetera*. By SUSAN SONTAG. Gollancz, £4.95.

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the absence of narrative is crossed by an intelligent observation of life in the twilight of the '70s—in "Debriefing" people are "videotaping their own bedroom feats, tapping their own telephones." And earlier the narrator elaborates on the statement that "we know more than we can use":

> Look at all this stuff I've got in my head: rockets and Venetian churches, David Bowie and Diderot, nuoc mam and Big Macs, sunglasses and orgasms.

This mix of global *bric-à-brac* is reminiscent of Updike, who always draws it into the context of his narrative and so makes it much more luminous and effective. And like Updike, Susan Sontag sees people who "try to be interested in the surface. Men without guns are wearing mascara, glittering, prancing. Everyone's in some kind of moral drag." In the richer cities of the Western world, and in parts of California, culture does appear to be aspiring to the single surface of a Möbius strip, but that aspiration cannot be reflected in the baldness of direct statement—as Gordimer and Updike wisely know. All too often Susan Sontag attempts to tell a story and succeeds merely in being dull and brisk, like a poor Feiffer cartoon.

Such efforts to be subtle which result in a flat obviousness of intention flaw the work of Lurie, Spark, and Sontag. However, it's unfair to place Alison Lurie in this category as *Only Children* is extremely skilled and has occasional brilliances which redeem its mnemonic haziness. Heller's main failing is that his euphoric fluency is too close to Gold's solipsism and this makes his thick volume feel curiously light-weight, like a comic balloon puttering off into nowhere. None of these writers has the historical sense which Gordimer and Updike, in their different ways, possess, and although it's wrong to level talent down to a matter of contact with the historical process, the different Africas of *Burger's Daughter* and *The Coup* are much more imaginatively rich than New York, Venice or Birmingham. Even so there is no point in echoing Harry Lime's sick remark about Switzerland and the cuckoo clock: whatever the discontents of a liberal democracy may be, a culture of cuckoo clocks and detective stories is easily better than any alternative polity.

Rooms must be Vacated before Noon on Day of Departure

At the end of an Irish tour, in a town that could be called
Trevorstown, after William Trevor, who lived here before he
changed his name and became a famous novelist and lived in
Devonshire, a town whose name some of the natives of the country pronounce as though

it were the sound made by an English crow—

but I pronounce it like the name of the thing that gets stuck
in the neck of a bottle—in the Glenvera I enjoy a sausage-egg-
and-tea delicious breakfast, modifying thus the slight
hangover induced by mixing St Raphael with Cork Dry Gin,

and I have almost no sense of sin.

Why should I? Literary tours and excursions are meritorious
endeavours and those who engage in them deserve well of the
creature comforts and should never creep about crying *Peccavi!,*
as they rattle in trains across the centre of Ireland, which
is very flat—

but that's enough of that.

I don't want to talk about guilt and I won't talk about
guilt because this, although it is work of a kind, is also a
kind of holiday and I have a sense of release drinking Guinness
in Montenotte—where the sun shines down in a very Italianate way

and work seems very like play.

Gavin Ewart

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PRESS

Why *The Times & Sunday Times* Vanished

By Simon Jenkins

IN MAY 1979 an outside observer of the British press would have been astonished. *The Times* newspaper, far from handing down stentorian opinions on the state of the British general election then in progress—as it had on every such occasion for a hundred years—was off the streets, engaged in a messy struggle to get some Turkish migrant workers in Germany to produce its election editorial for distribution to foreign subscribers. The attempt was ultimately futile. It was not an edifying testament to the prestige of a great press empire, and observers were quick to extend the lesson to British industry as a whole.

SIMON JENKINS *is Political Editor of "The Economist." He was for two years editor of the London "Evening Standard", during which time it changed ownership from the Beaverbrook family to the Trafalgar House group. He previously worked for both the "Sunday Times" as editor of the Insight team, and the "Times Educational Supplement." His recent book, "Newspapers: The Power and the Money" (Faber), was an analysis of the changing relationship between newspaper proprietors and their unions. His previous books include "Landlords to London" and "City at Risk", both studies of London architecture.*

The immediate cause of the trouble at *The Times* was straightforward. Following persistent and massive disruption the management, under the direction of Lord Thomson in Toronto, gave *The Times'* unions notice in May 1978 that it wished to negotiate agreements covering dispute procedures, overmanning and what they termed the "management's right to manage." Failure to sign the agreements by November 1978 would lead to the indefinite closure of the five titles in the group: *The Times,* the *Sunday Times,* and the *Times Educational, Higher Education* and *Literary Supplements.* The majority of the unions involved did not sign the agreements and the titles duly closed on 30 November. Since then, the company—which was expecting to make a profit of some £3.5 millions in 1978-9—has not been trading at all. Instead, it had by July 1979 borne overheads and wages (to those workers who had signed agreements) of £20 millions. Meanwhile, its competitors were daily consolidating their hold on its old markets. The titles are still closed as I write this article.

The real cause of *The Times'* crisis, however, lay much deeper. Fleet Street abounds in experts at being wise after the event. And no aspect of British hypocrisy is quite as ingrained as that of newspapermen lecturing others on the failure of modern British industry. But the closure of *The Times* and the miscalculations which have surrounded it provide a vignette of what has happened and is still happening to many privately-owned British firms and industries. Such firms are not susceptible to conventional market analysis—any more than nationalised ones are. They are owned and run by men whose motivations can rarely be expressed in terms of profit or loss and staffed by workers whose behaviour cannot be explained by the traditional economics of survival. When, as at *The Times*, an owner's motivation suddenly shifts, the effect can be far more traumatic than the economic facts of the case appear to justify. I believe that no one will understand any newspaper dispute if he assumes it is simply about money. It is about something subtly different: the power to make money. Ultimately it is about control. The *Times* dispute is a classic case of this.

The Times' management came to lay great stress, as their dispute developed, on the issue of the "new technology" and the notorious resistance of their unions to management proposals for introducing it. This stress, however, which in the minds of some took on the character of a mighty crusade, was largely cosmetic. Certainly the question of new investment was important: for big national newspapers computer-assisted printing is as full-blown a revolution as was the jet engine to aviation. And no one doubted that this revolution would be

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accompanied by conflict and strain, as has been the case on newspapers across the world. But it was noticeable that some Thomson executives (Thomson British Holdings is the British parent company for Times Newspapers Ltd) were expressing surprise in the course of 1978 that the new technology had become so symbolic an issue of the dispute. To them the fight was over something quite different: over the management's "right to manage" a company which had descended, so it seemed, into anarchy. Without some massive reassertion of this right, they argued, the benefits of any investment could not be realised and indeed normal production of the newpapers could not be guaranteed.

BUT WHAT WAS this "right to manage"? By late 1977, the disruption experienced by both *The Times* and the *Sunday Times* was similar to that being suffered throughout Fleet Street—though much worse. Virtually no edition of the *Sunday Times* was leaving the presses on time, to the extent that it was being dubbed the *Sunday Sometimes* by its exasperated distributors. The famous *Times* accuracy was being constantly sabotaged by misprints. And the production cycle on both papers seemed wholly dependent on apparently unrelated decisions taken by dozens of tiny groups of workers (known as union "chapels") rather than by a coherent managerial hierarchy. Large areas of production—for instance the printing machine room—appeared to operate quite independent of supervision or quality control.

Most newspaper managements would agree that they had allowed their "right" to order this state of affairs to lapse over the years. Indeed, this lapse could be considered responsible for the collapse of one newspaper empire after another in the 1960s and 1970s. However, they had a duty to their readers and shareholders which clearly involved the assertion of traditional managerial authority over their assets. It was from this duty that the corresponding right emanated, and the unions had to accept this right as overriding the various concessions which had been made in the past. It is one thing to state such an interpretation, however; it is a different thing altogether to have it accepted by the other side. Much though it might accord with some theory of company structure, it bore little relationship to the reality of industrial relations on the newspapers concerned. And it begged what the unions regarded as their right: to protect absolutely the interests of their members under threat of technological obsolescence. If management had over the years ceded them weapons to enforce this protection—power over recruitment, quality control, job definition, staff discipline—without any commensurate duties or responsibilities, that was management's business. The only right management now had was the right to parley, not demand.

THE MODERN PRINTER is quite unlike most other organised industrial workers, whose sense of collective identity was bred out of 19th-century exploitation and class solidarity.

In the first place, the printer is a craftsman who can trace his collectivism back to the 17th century (and most of his tools to the 19th). Since the middle ages, printing has been a close-knit freemasonry of skilled men who have combined together, not to defeat the capitalist, but more narrowly to protect their own commercial interests against the vagaries of the free market. As early as the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, London printers were emerging as among the most militant and best paid of the artisan class. Their societies and associations never were, and still are not, called unions. Printers are great historians and their old craft groupings live on today within the larger amalgamations, fragmenting loyalties and diluting central discipline. A printer never works "for" anyone, but "at" a particular office. Employers who equate printers with, say, miners or railwaymen—and an alarming number do—are making a fatal mistake. They should examine instead the negotiating practices of the self-employed plumber, or the craftsman, or even the lawyer.

This facet of printing appears to be intrinsic. It is remarkably similar on the European continent and in America. In New York, the task groupings, the payment patterns, and even the styles of union leadership have—until recent struggles—been a mirror image of experience in London. Though this can in part be explained by the migration of many British printers to America in the early part of the century, it is largely due to the nature of the newspaper printer's job: the application of detailed craftsmanship to a complex and fast-moving production cycle. As with the manufacture of a motor car, a wide range of skills must be coordinated in the right sequence to produce the final product, skills which in printing are loaded with historical significance: the copy-holder, the roller-inker, the piece case hand, the machine minder.

By the time the printer has reached Fleet Street, working his way up the apprenticeship hierarchy in the provinces or in jobbing printing, he has specialised in one or other of these skills. Entry is strictly controlled by the relevant union's central London branch. If a vacancy occurs on the paper, the union is informed by workers on the paper and duly sends someone along. The management is not involved, and traditionally accepts automatically whoever is sent. And very rarely does a man shift or gain promotion within a paper or between papers once that coveted job is obtained. This not only gives the individual workers a relative lack of interest in the activities of his fellow workers elsewhere on the paper (except in the financial matter of pay differentials). It also makes him

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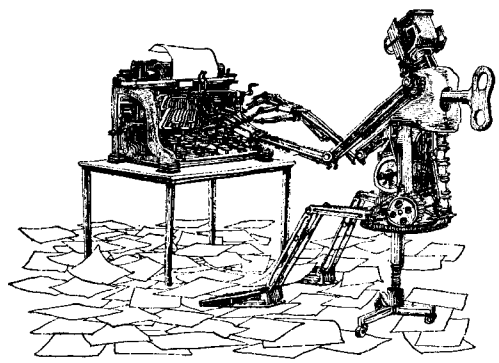
largely uninterested in the future of the industry as a whole.

NOT SURPRISINGLY, every attempt to amalgamate negotiating bodies in particular sections of a printing plant soon founders. Even one union, such as the craft National Graphical Association, is an uneasy coalition of conflicting interests on each paper, and its shop steward—known grandly as the "imperial father of the chapel"—is beholden to his subsidiary fathers of such chapels as the "NGA time-hands" or the "NGA machine minders." The *Times* management, for instance, counted 64 separate negotiating units in its Gray's Inn Road plant, each demanding as of right independent treatment as independent workpeople. Similarly any attempt by management to streamline a process which might jeopardise the existence of any one of these groups is equally doomed to failure. For once he has obtained his Fleet Street job from his union it is with that process that each man's future lies. Workers on any other process will be as resistant to trespass as are barristers to solicitors in the courtroom.

Much of this applies, of course, to any complex production-line industry. What makes newspapers different is that they are a manufacturing industry with the disciplines of a service industry. The output of a man's labour is almost instantly perishable. Not only does the production line move with breakneck speed through the night, but quality control must in theory be stringent. This gives each group of workers immense discretion over the efficiency of the operation. The slightest delay, a deliberate mistake requiring costly correction, or a broken reel of paper running through a machine, can mean deliveries missed and revenue foregone. And in the highly competitive world of British national newspapers, rivals are always quick to leap on to such misfortune. This gives each individual chapel immense bargaining power precisely at the point where it can be made most effective: not round the negotiating table with senior management briefed and prepared, but across the shop-floor with junior management under great pressure to keep production moving. Deals are done and bargains struck—later to be enshrined laboriously in agreements which, if the management wishes to alter them, are again subject to new deals and new bargains.

Out of this system has grown a structure of payments so complicated that few people even among those most closely involved know what is happening—payments for late shifts and early shifts, for extra pages, involving extra "work", payments for work "surrendered" to a different chapel, payments to that chapel for having the work surrendered to it. The most fruitful source of additional payments has been *for work not done at all*—for "resting" or leaving early on a shift. These payments have over the years been compounded into "blow time" and "ghost" entitlements of truly fantastic complexity. And the multiplicity of bargaining units means that any payment, however tiny, made to one group immediately becomes the cause of claims right across the plant—and often right across the industry. Some of the late-night deals struck with chapels on the recently-launched *Daily Star* in Manchester led to some of the most spectacular knock-on claims ever seen in the industry. A rough estimate of payments in a typical Fleet Street machine room has suggested that only about a third of the money paid out in wages is covered by a man actually working on the job.

WHILE IT IS TRUE that such activities have arisen out of the nature of newspaper production, newspaper managements have historically been the last people to seek to correct them. The great proprietors were often characterised as old-fashioned aristocrats struggling to deal with the power of modern trade-unionism. In fact they were the opposite. They were new-fangled entrepreneurs in a booming industry forced to take aboard the practices and traditions of an archaic craft to get their papers produced. The fact that the crafts concerned charged them dear was of little concern—there was profit enough for all. Like Henry Ford and his "five-dollar day", proprietors such as Lord Northcliffe and Lord Beaverbrook were immensely proud of the wealth of their workers. Northcliffe thought all his men should be able to afford a car—in 1920! He and Beaverbrook resisted vigorously the attempts of other proprietors to force down wages during the Depression. And managers who expressed concern about labour costs or sought to resist chapel demands were brusquely overruled. Their job, in the proprietorial phrase dreaded by every line manager, was simply to "get the paper out on time." The one index of success was circulation. The one sin was non-appearance. Costs and



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budgets were tedious unglamorous details which could be dealt with later. It was all a militant trade unionist's dream.

The excitement of newspaper production reflected itself in the motives for which most proprietors ran their papers—motives which rarely had anything to do with financial gain. The obsession with politics of the older men—Northcliffe, Rothermere, Beaverbrook, Kemsley—was a continuation of the Victorian tradition of political proprietorship. It did their empires little good and usually much harm when the industry peaked after the last war. And the neglect of normal marketing and cost control led to the eventual demise of all but a handful of them. The collapses came thick and fast: Kemsley's *Sunday Times* (1959), Cadbury's *News Chronicle* (1960), Southwood's *Daily Herald* (1961), Astor's *The Times* (1966), Carr's *The News of the World* (1969), the other Astor's *Observer* (1975), and Beaverbrook's *Daily* and *Sunday Express* (1977). Only the Harmsworth (Rothermere) and Berry (Camrose) families remained in command of their Fleet Street empires at the end of the '70s, both wracked by cost problems, while *The Guardian* struggled on with its subsidy from the Manchester *Evening News*.

THE NEW PROPRIETORS who bought out these empires in the '60s and '70s, though they were less ambitious politically, were no less motivated by the thrill and prestige of ownership. The first Lord Thomson, when taking over *The Times*, described what was to prove a financial millstone round his neck as "the greatest deal I have ever done . . . we were setting no limit to the amount of money we were prepared to put into it, and we were asking no guarantees about ever getting it back." Similarly another transatlantic proprietor dazzled by the prospect of ownership, Robert Anderson of Atlantic Richfield, spoke in hallowed terms of his purchase for £1 of *The Observer* as "working with an institution engaged in the development and exchange of ideas", not as an extension of his business empire at all. And when the conglomerate Trafalgar House took over the ailing Beaverbrook titles in 1977, its chairman (Nigel Broakes) privately admitted that they had been acquired to give his number two, Victor Matthews, something to do—an intention Matthews duly lived up to as he became *de facto* editor-in-chief of the *Daily Express*.

It was significant that none of the sales of the old newspaper concerns which took place in the '60s and '70s (with the exception of *The Sun*) involved a concerted war on costs by the new proprietors. And this was despite the fact that extravagantly high costs had played so major a part in their predecessors' failure. Indeed, potential buyers for any title which came on to the market were so avid as to tilt the balance against any buyer who so much as mentioned "cost-cutting" or compulsory redundancy—hence the predisposition against News International's Rupert Murdoch (later to migrate to New York), who was involved abortively in both the *Observer* and Beaverbrook take-overs, and the strength of such improbable but flamboyant proprietors as Sir James Goldsmith, Tiny Rowland and Robert Maxwell.

THE RESULT WAS that little or nothing was done during the period of the sales to bring labour costs under control. Indeed the seller's market for titles had the reverse effect. *The Observer* was under constant pressure after its purchase by Anderson to re-establish manning levels in the machine room which had been cut as a desperate measure under the Astor régime. Rupert Murdoch at *The Sun*, who had insisted on new manning levels as a precondition to taking over the title (which no other plausible bidder wanted), found when it became profitable that his chapels relentlessly forced up his costs towards levels then prevailing at the *Daily Mirror*. And most spectacular of all, losses at *The Times*, which under Astor had been averaging some £250,000 a year, soared under Thomson to nearer £1 million. Though he came increasingly to begrudge such a drain on what were his personal finances, Thomson kept paying out for what he regarded as the crowning glory of his commercial career: 21 years of financial security and independence for *The Times*. His ecstasy at owning both *The Times* and the *Sunday Times* shines through his autobiography, *After I was Sixty* (1975), and must have played a major part in postponing the agonising decisions which his son eventually took after his death in 1976 to try to bring the group's costs under control.

HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE UNFAIR to suggest that it was proprietorial vanity alone which sent *The Times'* costs through the roof in the 1960s and early '70s; just as it would be naive to suggest that the Thomson touch at *The Times* was as *laissez-faire* as he liked to imply (the *laissez-faire* applied strictly to the leading articles). And here we come to the nub of the problem.

In a manner strongly reminiscent of the great proprietors, Thomson and his assistants initially believed that a newspaper's strength lay in increasing its circulation, yielding hitherto untapped riches of cover price and advertising revenue (especially the latter). Accordingly the paper took off in pursuit of the "middlebrow" reader after its elder sister, the *Sunday Times*, under the tutelage of the latter's former editor Denis Hamilton. It tried to break through its existing circulation barrier of just

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below 300,000 to achieve 500,000 or above, at which stage it was felt it could increase its advertising rates and begin to dent the dominance of the *Daily Telegraph* (selling four times as much) in the quality newspaper market.

Every ploy was tried: advertising campaigns, special offers and supplements, cut-price subscriptions to students and an editorial revamp with lively presentation, columnists, and women's articles. The new look was derisively dubbed "qualipop" by the old-established members of the staff. The circulation indeed soared—but the strategy failed. As Michael Mander, a marketing man who is currently a senior executive with Times Newspapers, has since written:

> "*The Times* moved into dangerous waters. Its sale shot from 270,000 to 450,000—a remarkable achievement. But its higher sale made it no more attractive as an advertising medium. It already had its corner of the market established; adding to the readership just watered down the essential target group, and increased the cost of reaching it."

In other words, every extra copy of *The Times* sold cost it more to produce and market than it made in additional revenue.

In the early '70s, this policy was put into reverse. The circulation was allowed to slide back down to concentrate on a more clearly defined market—by 1978 it was below 300,000 again. Labour costs, however, had continued to rise throughout the '70s. Extra staff and other costs employed to increase sales could not so easily be laid off. Another major crisis occurred during the advertising recession of 1975–6, both on *The Times* and on the *Sunday Times*. And it was not until the upturn in advertising revenues in 1977 that the management could see a clear profit ahead for the titles as a whole.

BY THEN, the first Lord Thomson (Roy) had died and at least £10 millions of the family's fortune had been sunk into the paper. It had been part of Thomson's undertaking to the Monopolies Commission at the time of his purchase that the papers would not be a charge on the public shareholders of the group, thus protecting them from any pressure to cut costs and editorial quality should things not turn out well. They would be placed in family trusts where the losses would be borne privately. Thomson's enthusiasm at the time embraced his son as well. He remarked that he was "greatly moved that my son . . . wholeheartedly agreed with me in pouring away all those millions to save an ideal." As a hostage to this pledge his son also undertook to live in England as and when he should inherit the empire. (All who would jump to conclusions about the nature of modern industrial proprietorship from Thomson should realise just how paternal was his attitude to his acquisition.) Despite the frenetic efforts of his subordinates to make the papers profitable—and Lord Thomson's concern for these efforts—there was never any question of threatening closure as long as the old man was glorying in that crisp white product on his breakfast table each morning.

BY NOW, HOWEVER, a new element had entered into the management-union equation, at *The Times* and elsewhere in Fleet Street. Two Royal Commissions and an Economist Intelligence Unit report had already focused attention on Fleet Street's payments chaos. Partly as a result, partly under threat of take-over, managers on one paper after another sought to introduce "comprehensive agreements" into their labour relations. These consolidated all payments to a chapel into a single rate for the job. This rate was usually a lump payment related to the number of men estimated as being required to man a particular machine or process, plus agreed extras for overtime, days off, rest periods and pagination (or workload). The newly agreed manning levels would thus reflect existing "ghost payments"—say 175 men per shift though only 100 were actually needed—and it would be left to chapel officials to distribute the extras in accordance with their existing rights in hiring staff. This dramatically increased the power of the union shop floor officials.

At the same time, management left it to the chapels to police other aspects of the agreements—such as the allocation of men to particular jobs. In many machine and composing rooms, it is the father of chapel who tells a man *what job* to do and *when* to do it, not his formal overseer. He tells him when to take time off, arranges with him his rotas and holidays and fits in "a mate" with a shift if he needs some extra cash. The father of chapel thus exercises a crucial discretion not only over the filling of vacancies but, effectively, over the size of an individual printer's eventual wage packet as well. Such traditional centres of authority as the head printer, the production manager or the publisher are left as pleading diplomats haggling endlessly with chapel officials in their efforts to get the paper out. Students of *The Times*' dispute will remember an incident filmed by *Panorama* in which a manager was seen begging a machine-room chapel official to let him have a few thousand copies of that night's *Sunday Times* to catch the early trains. The official replied with the air of a top executive that he would see what he could do (which turned out to be not much).

IN THE EVENT, the history of comprehensive agreements showed that few were comprehensive and

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even fewer yielded much agreement. The same game of scaling special payments ever upwards (always under the pressure of editions) continued—with the added momentum of each concession being the better publicised within the context of the agreement. A whole new class of payments emerged. Chapel officials and central London branches became ever more powerful sub-contractors of what, in the building industry, would be called "lump labour." If a chapel wanted to raise its earnings, it simply did not fill a vacancy and picked up the extra wage packets instead—often using false names to do so. It was estimated in 1978 that as much as £1m. in tax revenue was going unpaid through these channels. Management complaints about "falling productivity" would be greeted with a catalogue of failures elsewhere in the agreement which could only be rectified if more shifts were paid for by management.

The brittleness of the agreements inevitably led to their breaking under the strain of fast production. In my own experience, labour agreements in the newspaper industry are rarely broken by unions or by management; they are broken by circumstances which constantly demand operational flexibility but never get it. Thus a junior manager may be reluctant to invoke a disputes procedure (a point senior management seldom understand) because the result may be a reversion by a chapel to the letter of an agreement which "custom and practice" have allowed to bend over the years. Good will builds up around an agreement which in itself becomes a bargaining counter in a dispute. The very intimacy and informality of a newspaper production line make the language of the "contract" inappropriate. But it is when this intimacy descends into anarchy that management's patience becomes exhausted and their impotence truly frustrating. This frustration was reinforced in the mid-'70s when they had to bear the brunt of successive pay policies, whose effect was to involve all sides in industrial negotiations in constant contortions of enforcement or evasion. By the end of 1977 there is no doubt that the managerial staff at Times Newspapers, reeling from constant disruption (they lost some 20% of total output in the first quarter of the year) and stunned by the death from a heart attack of the general manager, Harvey Thompson, felt they had had enough. With a new absentee proprietor himself exercised about the state of the company, they were ready for a showdown.

THE MANAGEMENT of Times Newspapers was led by its chief executive, Marmaduke ("Duke") Hussey. He in turn answered to Gordon Brunton, chief executive of Thomson's British operations, and through him to Lord Thomson in Canada. Hussey was a newspaper executive of the old school, having been manager at Rothermere's Associated Newspapers before moving to *The Times*. Hearty and patrician rather than a subtle negotiator, he was perhaps a man to "keep the ship on an even keel in open sea", as one colleague put it, rather than steer it through the maelstrom of a technological revolution. Brunton had been Lord Thomson's right-hand man and architect of much of his diversification policy; he was a brilliant businessman rather than a student of newspaper industrial relations. Their overall boss, Thomson himself, was a retiring undemonstrative character, eager to expand his business worldwide but deeply unhappy at the continued drain which the apparently anarchic Times Newspapers subsidiary was placing on his family fortune and on the energies of his British executives.

On his father's death, the new Lord Thomson (Kenneth) had ignored one of the undertakings given to the Monopolies Commission—that he should come to live in England. In 1978 he effectively overrode another. He decided to transfer ownership of Times Newspapers from his family interests into the hands of the group as a whole. This was achieved in April 1978. In view of the simultaneous threat to the unions of closure, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that these two decisions were linked. Thomson may have argued that his family had put quite enough into the papers as it was, and since profit was at last in sight, it was right that the public shareholders should share the further burden of industrial confrontation. But this was some way from his father's 21-year absolute guarantee "without asking anything in return." That guarantee still had eleven years to run.

ALL SENIOR THOMSON—and *Times*—executives were adamant at the start of the dispute that they had a clearly-prepared game plan for eventual victory. Duke Hussey and the editor-in-chief Sir Denis Hamilton had been complaining for years to the board that revenue and profit targets could not be met because of continuing union disruption and lack of managerial control. Gordon Brunton accordingly told Hussey that the time had come to regain that control; he should present a plan for the board who, with the backing of North Sea oil, were now in a position to back him up. This Hussey proceeded to do.

The terms of the management's ultimatum to the Times Newspapers' chapels, delivered in a letter in May 1978, would seem reasonable enough to an outside observer. In a nutshell, it gave the chapels six months to discuss and sign agreements covering (*1*) the introduction of new computer-based printing technology in the composing room area (largely an NGA domain), (*2*) new manning levels generally, and (*3*) new disputes procedures—the

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whole intended to bring down costs and eliminate stoppages. Each management department was asked to set out its ideal requirements and these would be subject to negotiation during the summer. There was a specific undertaking that no one would be made redundant against his will and that generous terms would be offered to those leaving voluntarily.

No chapel rejected the terms outright, though a general lack of enthusiasm was evident. There was some criticism over the delay in forwarding detailed proposals to each chapel and the lack of time eventually to debate them. Preliminary agreement was reached on the "new technology"—some £3 millions of which was already bought and lying idle in the *Sunday Times* building in Gray's Inn Road. But the NGA resolutely refused to yield access to the new equipment to any other members of staff. Since the equipment had been designed so that journalists could type their stories direct into the computer store, this refusal was a direct challenge to the management requirement that it should be the arbiter of who should use what.

THE NGA'S OBSTRUCTION was to prove the breaking point of all further efforts at agreement. The Association, under its president, Les Dixon, and its London regional secretary, Bill Booroff, represented precisely those workers most at risk from the new technology—linotype operators and compositors casting lines of type in "hot metal" and arranging them in frames for despatch to the foundry for casting. They were ready to agree quite substantial manning reductions and an end to the lucrative London Scale of Prices, determining linotype operators' pay. The issue on which they would not shift was control of the use of the new computer equipment, sensing that once other workers—especially journalists and advertising clerks—were given access to it, this would eventually mean a drastic reduction in their role in the production process. Besides, elsewhere in Fleet Street the NGA were already negotiating deals which left its members in full command of the new technology—despite the fact that this meant that all material typed by journalists and clerks had to be retyped by NGA operators on to the terminals (the notorious "double keystroking"). This restrictive and clearly wasteful principle had by the spring of 1979 been conceded not only on virtually all provincial newspapers (including those owned by Thomson) but also by the Mirror Group, *The Observer*, Express Newspapers and *The Guardian*. Les Dixon, quite apart from the future of his *Times* members, naturally feared any concession on access would jeopardise his hard-won gains elsewhere. In addition, the relatively poor outlook for NGA compositors in Fleet Street had already led to a dramatic fall in the supply of new recruits coming forward. As a result, the threat of unemployment was not as real to Fleet Street NGA men as it might once have seemed. Despite the prophets of gloom, Fleet Street had been a remarkably buoyant market over the past two decades. And the result was a "seller's market" for NGA labour. Dixon, bluntly, could afford to be tough.

There is much evidence that the last thing the

High Road to Disaster

IF NEWSPAPERS *were published in international competition, then the position which has already been reached on Fleet Street could not conceivably be maintained, but I do not believe it can be maintained in any case. It is cheaper to print newspapers almost anywhere in the world rather than London. When we published an edition in Frankfurt we established that the Frankfurt level of costs was less than a third of the London level. That includes the cost of paper and freight; the strict production cost is about a fifth of the London cost.*

In Frankfurt the staff producing the paper numbered twenty-five Turks and fifteen Germans. This was a weekly, though only a few worked for more than one day on it, and was only sixteen pages, but even the 40 have to be compared with a pure production staff of 412 for a minimum 24 page paper in London. The German women compositors in Frankfurt set 18,500 characters an hour in their own language, and 12,500 in ours. On electronic equipment *The Times* have put forward 10,000 as a proposal, and the N.G.A. has offered 7,000; on Linotype machines N.G.A. members set about 3,500 characters an hour. A Linotype operator, who may now on Fleet Street be paid between £250 and £450 a week, thus has only 20% of the productivity of a German woman operating an electronic keyboard, or 30% if she is setting English.

PERHAPS *Fleet Street can stagger on though I would not be confident about that. But a nation which cannot adopt new methods is doomed, just as the armoured knight was doomed when guns appeared on the battlefield. When I saw a middle-aged German woman in Darmstadt rippling out* The Times *on her keyboard, in a language foreign to her, with hardly an error in a column, at more than three times the speed of an efficient London Linotype operator, it seemed to me to be a most dangerous symbol of the contrasting attitudes of our two nations. The Germans embrace efficiency; the British fight to reject it. It is, for us, a high road to disaster.*

William Rees-Mogg

Editor of THE TIMES
in the DAILY TELEGRAPH *(London)*

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management wanted was to make an issue out of the new technology. They had been discussing it with the NGA off and on since May 1976; they accepted there would be difficulties over it; and they would have preferred to keep it distinct from the issue of industrial discipline over which they had really intended to fight. Hussey even made efforts, as the November deadline drew near, to have the issue withdrawn from the ultimatum altogether and discussed separately. The NGA were not prepared to do this. Following closure, it was significant that the new technology became increasingly symbolic of the "management's right to manage." And particularly for the hotter heads on the board, it came to seem the be-all and end-all of the whole battle. What should have been a brief if bloody encounter became a holy war, with all the emotion such crusades evince. And by forcing the NGA back to a position they felt they had to defend at all costs, the management effectively lost the advantage of single-mindedness over what had been their original objective. Other unions, fighting to keep hold of their own less defensible irregularities, were able to march under the NGA's banner of high principle. This subtle shift in battleground did more than anything else to undermine the management's strategy.

The other unions offered obstacles less fundamental, but no less intractable. Further along the production process, equally bitter resistance was encountered from members of NATSOPA (the National Society of Operative Printers, Graphical and Media Personnel). Its main power bases were in the clerical departments and the machine room, particularly the latter. On the *Sunday Times*, the machine room had been the source of much of the disruption of the previous year. The bulk of the staff were casuals, recruited directly by their union branch office from men often working at other newspapers during the week. To them the *Sunday Times* was pure jam. Although not affected by the new technology, the management's demand for reduced manning would effectively cut their earnings, while the new disputes procedures (initially involving head office discipline and penalty clauses) undermined the standing of their chapel officials. Other groups of workers, in the block process department (SLADE), engineers, electricians, distribution staff (SOGAT), and journalists (NUJ), were less militant largely because their earnings and work patterns were less affected. Some signed agreements, notably the journalists (though with much soul-searching), but all became increasingly disenchanted with the management as the stoppage continued. (Indeed, considering the strong editorial stance adopted by the papers against union militancy in the past, it was noticeable how little private and public support the *Times* management received from their own journalists during the dispute.)

IN DECEMBER 1978, the management began laying off those staff who had not signed new agreements through their chapel officials, most of them on up to three-month contracts. By the following March, however, there had been almost no movement and a concerted effort was made by Albert Booth, the Labour Government's Employment Secretary, to bring the parties together. Talks were duly held on a new management deadline, 17 April, under which sacked staff would be re-engaged (though not fully reinstated) and given half their back pay, the rest of this pay to follow the signing of new agreements. This was widely regarded as a major concession by management, and was assumed to presage some corresponding concessions from the NGA in negotiation in an effort to get the papers back before the forthcoming general election. Once again progress was made on the new technology, but once again the issue of "unique access" for the NGA to the terminals proved the sticking point. NATSOPA also maintained their opposition, though old hands always regarded their machine men as likely to do a deal at the eleventh hour and felt that some manning concessions could be wrung from them if the NGA issue could be settled.

IT COULD NOT. Once again the deadline passed without agreement—and the re-engaged staff were duly sacked again.

The management now made real concessions. At further talks at NGA headquarters in Bedford in May, they offered a deal whereby the NGA would retain the right to keystroke all material entering the typesetting computers for an "experimental" period of two years, but insisted that journalists be able to call up and correct this material on terminal screens. They argued that this was essentially a journalist's job anyway; in the "old" technology it was the task normally performed by a sub-editor with pencil, scissors and paste. The NGA were effectively demanding not a retention of existing territory but an extension into the journalistic area. It was estimated, very approximately, that the amount of "keystroking" the NGA would be yielding was initially a mere 7%. This was regarded by the NGA as a crucial concession of principle, and it was rejected as such. One of the union negotiators, Bill Booroff, remarked that

> "once this obdurate management had secured a foot in the door, clearly it would have been only a matter of time before they forced much more drastic measures on the NGA with consequent decimation of employment opportunities."

It was hard to see how any Fleet Street manager was in a position to force anything on Mr Booroff—and equally hard to dispute *The Times'* claim that he was not making a single concession to

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get the papers restarted. The union refused to go to arbitration.

New trouble was also brewing among the NATSOPA clerical staff. These workers, concentrated in the advertising department, were organised as virtually the private fiefdom of their father of chapel, Barry Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick had effectively hamstrung the use of accountancy computerisation at Times Newspapers, and now found himself in danger of being yet further left in the technological shade in any possible carve-up of computer typesetting between the NGA and the journalists. With such fundamental demarcation issues unresolved, it was clearly hard to make progress with NATSOPA over the more straightforward matter of manning levels and disputes procedure. It was noticeable that the negotiations with the craft association, the NGA, were conducted with reasonable if tedious decorum and the active participation of national officers. The centre of power in NATSOPA was very much on the shop floor, with Fitzpatrick (in the clerical department) and a flamboyant militant, Reg Brady (in the machine room), exercising control through their power over recruitment and casual earnings. This power was direct, widely resented, but largely unquestioned. Those who must deal with it each night in Fleet Street compare it with that of the dockers' union leaders under "casualisation." In fact it is much nearer the power of the old-fashioned "boss" of Marxist legend. Brady in particular, whose authority as a chapel official extended over the machine rooms at the London *Evening Standard* and *Reveille* where he also worked, was a classic Fleet Street power-broker.

THE FAILURE OF THE May concessions to elicit any positive response from the unions cast the management side into despair and clearly divided the *Times* board. Some members, including William Rees-Mogg, editor of *The Times*, became enthusiasts for seeking to print the paper abroad—leading to the abortive German venture. But most merely continued the constant argument within the board over the wisdom of continuing with the existing strategy. By May it had become a deeply divided body of men, and outsiders were openly debating the likelihood of the titles being sold either in whole or part. The trade's *UK Press Gazette* argued the virtues of selling the printing plant to another management to whom *The Times* would sub-contract their printing—largely as a gambit to get the existing management off the hook. Yet the management's continuing resolve to secure control of the new technology would not be met this way, and selling the titles would have been a more open breach with the Thomson inheritance than even the new Lord Thomson was likely to contemplate.

PERHAPS A MORE HOPEFUL way forward lay in the direct talks which began, also following the May failure, between the NGA and the journalists' union, the NUJ. These discussions, taken up by an eight-man working party drawn from *Times* and *Sunday Times* staff, centred on the possibility of the NGA conceding at least a minimal amount of use of the computer terminals to journalists—in effect what the management had wanted but with the added inducement that the NUJ might conceivably be able to offer the NGA some tasks normally performed by journalists as a *quid pro quo*. (As one of the unions involved put it, "We find it easier to talk about these matters to other unionists than to management.") Clearly it was a matter for debate just whose work was involved in copy correction on the terminals—though a matter of no debate at all that it was wasteful for a journalist to sit next to an operator in front of the screen simply telling him what to do (as happens on some newspapers). If some compromise formula could be found on this score the management appeared by early June to be in a mood to accept.

The obstacles which would remain even after such a deal were Augean. A further understanding would have to be reached with the NATSOPA clerical staff. And then the threads of all the other chapel negotiations would have to be picked up, of which "the management's right to manage" in the machine and clerical departments was probably the most intractable of all. The management's best hopes lay in a momentum of enthusiasm building up following some sort of NGA/NUJ deal, with each chapel signing new manning agreements and disputes procedures in order not to be seen to delay re-opening. Certainly, they already had outlined acceptance of such agreements, including a substantial contribution towards the manning reductions they had originally sought, from the NGA and the publishing union, SOGAT. If signed, these would give Hussey and his colleagues at least some respectable offerings to present to the Thomson board.

In the event, even so tenuous a basis for settlement was not to be. On 21 June, the NGA national council felt there was no point in any concession even to the NUJ, and broke off talks by announcing their belief that the papers would never reopen. They said they were helping their *Times* members look for other jobs. The failure removed the last straw at which the management had been grasping. Their bargaining position on what had become the major issue of the dispute was now hopelessly weak. They were ready to concede it.

BEFORE EMBARKING ON their confrontation, *The Times*' management had clearly been much impressed by the stance adopted by the owners of

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the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in their respective battles with their unions. In both cases, owners faced the "new technology" issue head-on. They experienced costly disruption but eventually won through to revolutionise their composing rooms. However, the American experience was different in two important respects. First, both the Sulzbergers in New York and Mrs Katharine Graham in Washington carefully picked off just one union, the composing-room printers, isolating them from the rest of their work force. Already weakened by the progress of "new technology" across America, the printers were hard-pressed to relocate their members elsewhere (American print unions enjoy almost identical local recruitment monopolies to British ones); and they received little sympathy from other print unions, who saw the compositors' stand as a futile one which threatened their own livelihoods.

The other vital factor was that when the printers did show their strength the management was able to flex some muscle in return. The *Washington Post* was able to print out-of-town and ship its copies in, using "blackleg" labour to do so. The *New York Times* could invoke the support of the other New York papers and secure a joint closure of all metropolitan titles. Even so, the stoppage of the *New York Times* in 1974 over the "new technology" did nothing to stave off the equally bitter struggle over machine-room manning in 1978—with another costly stoppage and a less satisfactory outcome.

IN LONDON, HOWEVER, Brunton and Hussey found themselves committed to a battle on every front at once, with no allies and most of their shells blanks. *The Times* enjoyed no cooperation whatsoever from its competitors in Fleet Street. Successive attempts by the employers' Newspaper Publishers Association to form a united front either against union disruption or over the new technology had foundered. In 1976, a joint programme for action—drawn up by the unions and proprietors to lay down the ground rules for introducing the new technology to Fleet Street—was thrown out lock-stock-and-barrel by a referendum of Fleet Street chapels. They preferred to look after their own interests on the shop floor. Since then, each company has gone its own way, incidentally hoping to benefit from the discomforts of its rivals. Following the closure of the *Times* titles, *The Guardian*, the *Sunday* and *Daily Telegraph*, the *Financial Times* and *The Observer* all saw their circulations achieve new records. None appeared to feel that *The Times* was fighting a battle from which all would emerge winners—indeed some claimed that *The Times* was setting back technological advance by its tactics of "confrontation."

Nor did *The Times* have any apparent alternative printing strategy, which played so important a part in US newspaper struggles. British printing unions are far too close-knit to permit such strike-breaking, and a paper (even a weekly) printed overseas would never secure distribution in Britain. British unions do not have to agree with brother unions to be ready to show solidarity. The abortive attempt in April to print a special issue in Darmstadt, finally halted by Left-wing West German militant elements outside the factory gates, only served to point up the impotence of management in this respect. Although various schemes for printing abroad did continue in currency through the summer, they served more to maintain the morale of the individuals involved than to show a real way out of the impasse.

In addition, by taking on all the print unions at one time, the *Times*' management ensured that each would be watching the other for signs of backsliding, thus encouraging the majority to hold back an isolated chapel from compromise. It is perhaps conceivable that had an agreement indeed been signed with the NGA at some stage, the other unions would have searched more constructively for a meeting ground with management. But since the NGA showed no signs of giving an inch, no other chapel in dispute felt the need to give ground either. The result was to place a near intolerable burden on the management staff actually engaged in the negotiations. The deadlines—both November 1978 and April 1979—put all the pressure on management, in the knowledge that the longer the stoppage continued the more the Thomson board would begin to question their original strategy. The Thomson head office in Stratford Place off Oxford Street was described by one cynic as being like the White House during Viet Nam—"issuing constant statements of support for the generals at the front, while wondering why on earth all that money isn't winning the war!"

THE LONGER THE STOPPAGE continued, the more resolute the NGA in particular appeared to become. This reversal of the customary rules of free market economics concealed perhaps the management's biggest miscalculation of all. They assumed that closure and dismissal would over time progressively whittle away support for the NGA's stance as individual printers found their incomes declining and the prospect of a grim Christmas or summer-holiday period approaching. Provided management is rich enough and determined enough, the balance of power must shift its way.

However, printers, as we have seen, are different. Their unions enjoy monopoly control over Fleet Street staffing, and as *The Times* laid off staff so the London branches reallocated them round vacancies at other papers (though until June the NGA denied

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this). A virtual ban was placed by the unions on non-*Times* staff filling Fleet Street vacancies until *Times* staff had been satisfactorily relocated. A telex operator would do a holiday shift here, a machine assistant would be slotted into a "ghost" shift there: the losers in the *Times* closure were more likely to be casual workers on the fringe of the Fleet Street labour pool. And many printers these days do two jobs anyway—running a pub, or owning a shop or managing a mini-cab company, all on savings built up over years of good Fleet Street pickings.

Meanwhile, at one newspaper after another the compositors could see their colleagues maintaining precisely the control over the "new technology" which they had enjoyed over the old, and of which *The Times* was seeking to deprive them. It was noticeable that the large Thomson Regional group of titles had shown no similar determination on the issue. At the *Daily Mirror*, NGA men were already working the new equipment (though not without difficulties) and the *Express*, *Observer*, *Guardian* and *Mail* managements were accepting the principle of NGA unique access in their discussions on the new technology. It would be wrong to imply that no dismissed printer was actually out of pocket following *The Times'* closure—and the NGA maintained throughout that their 640 members were drawing lay-off pay of £80 a week and were not formally taking jobs elsewhere. But certainly most of the workers felt they had little to gain and much to lose by compromise. And the longer the closure lasted, the weaker became their commitment to the company and the more secure many of them inevitably became in whatever alternative employment they or their union had found.

These were not obstacles which emerged in the course of this dispute. They were intrinsic to the industrial relations framework within which modern newspaper administration operates. It is a poor comment on the quality of senior conglomerate management that it seems so unaware of the shift in the balance of industrial power within its own subsidiaries—a shift to which its own past concessions have largely contributed.

Times spokesmen were fond of deploring this shift. But deploring it and knowing how to reverse it are different things. Certainly, over the preceding two years, a number of Fleet Street managements had begun to toughen their attitude to their chapels. There had been a greater willingness to resort to the courts of law in conspiracy and contract litigation. Wilder union claims were being resisted with greater vigour, even at great cost in disruption. And a number of papers had experienced a tactical closure as a way of strengthening management's hand—including the *Financial Times*, the *Telegraph* and the *Express*. Some of these closures had been successful, others less so. But none had taken on *all* their unions in the cataclysmic fashion of *The Times*. And almost all were pursuing major technological investments by means of consultation—and necessary concession—rather than confrontation. It was true that they were denying themselves the full benefit of this technology by accepting the wasteful restrictive practice of "double keystroking." But such, they argued, was the weakness of modern management, which made discretion the better part of valour.

THE TIMES APPEARED, by July 1979, to have proved their strategy right. The potential gains in manning levels and "good behaviour" which the management had achieved were gains they could probably have achieved a year before. Fleet Street unions had come to accept that overmanning was an evil which had to be cured. And the NGA itself had long accepted the need to introduce new technology into the composing rooms sooner or later. But the issue on which the management eventually chose to hold out, that of access to and control of this technology, was effectively the issue which management had conceded to the NGA many years before when, in composing rooms as in machine or clerical departments, it handed over power to chapel officials.

Newspaper managements today can and do move forward, but they do so weakened by their own past mistakes. The *Times* management certainly made tactical miscalculations. But it was their own fundamental weakness as proprietors which dominated the dispute. They held only one weapon of real power—that of closure. Like all such ultimate weapons, its effectiveness relies on its deterrence value. On 30 November 1978, *The Times* was forced—by its own ultimatum—to wheel that weapon out and use it. The explosion was a big one. After the smoke had cleared, the battle lines looked the same. But two great newspapers had vanished.

POSTSCRIPT: On 29 June talks took place between leaders of the NGA and Lord Thomson in London. As a result of these talks (which followed a stormy annual meeting of Thomson International) it was agreed that the issue of "the new technology" was to be divorced from that of reopening *The Times*. Further "new technology" talks would take place between the management and relevant unions, to be concluded within 12 months. Meanwhile, talks on manning and disputes-procedure would recommence at once, as a prelude to publication—perhaps within a few months. Any management gains from the "new technology" discussions were, of course, "a matter for negotiation." But the proprietor had at last recognised the *force majeure* of the NGA position. "*The Thunderer*" had fallen back into the Fleet Street line.

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The Anti-Semitic Persuasion

"Roots" & "Jewish Identity"—By MAX BELOFF

FROM THE TIME of the dispersion Jews everywhere have had to cope with anti-Semitism. Nowhere altogether, and nowhere for long, has the practice of discrimination and the fear of worse failed to affect the behaviour of Jews as individuals or as a community. Recent events in more than one country suggest that even the horrors of the "Final Solution" have not had the permanent effect upon the credibility of anti-Semitism that, it was hoped, would be at least a partial consolation for the sufferings inflicted by the Nazis on the Jews of Europe.

Nor have the hopes of the Zionists that the creation of a Jewish national home or State would "normalise" the position of Jews all over the world been realised; on the contrary the creation and conduct of the Israeli State have given anti-Semites new arguments. Indeed its existence has had the effect of turning the lessons of the Nazi experience upside down: so much so that one gets in England the extraordinary spectacle of the so-called Anti-Nazi League led by and appealing to elements profoundly hostile to Israel, and wholly at one with the more violent of its enemies. Since a Jew, however assimilated, however much he may regard himself as an Englishman (of the Jewish persuasion), cannot but feel that any wound inflicted on the Jews of Israel is also a wound inflicted on all Jewry, the Anti-Nazi League from a Jewish point of view might just as well call itself the Pro-Nazi League even though its ostensible enemies in the "National Front" are themselves anti-Semitic.

The paradox is not confined to Britain nor to the present time. While anti-Semitism since the French Revolution has largely been a movement of the Right, of traditionalists who have seen in the emancipation of the Jews a contributing factor to the weakening of their status and privileges, secular or religious, it has also been true that there has always been an anti-Semitism of the Left, often less overt, less active, less vociferous, expressing itself in inaction rather than in the active pursuit of anti-Semitic policies, but present nevertheless. It is the characteristic of the anti-Semites of the Left to give precedence to some other cause than the protection of oppressed Jews—to the cause of the proletariat, or the peasantry, or the coloured races.

In the late 19th century, Christians in the West might rally opinion against the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria or Armenia; but (as Péguy saw it) for the most part they did not extend this concern to the fate of the Jews in the pogroms of Czarist Russia or in Rumania. In the end, only the Jews cared enough; and this for the Jews was the ultimate lesson of the Dreyfus Case which remains in all its ramifications and in its later historiography the most revealing event in the modern history of anti-Semitism. Its importance has been brought out in a new context by Dr Nelly Wilson in her learned and moving study of Bernard-Lazare, one of the most important and at the same time least well-known figures of the *Affaire*.[1]

FOR BERNARD-LAZARE—who came from a family long established on French soil; who had found his own freedom from what his milieu retained of Judaism first in the intellectual revolt of symbolism and then in highly intellectualised anarchism; who felt himself to be part and parcel of the Left intelligentsia of Paris; who accepted the equation between capitalism and Jewry to the extent of accepting current anti-Semitic stereotypes; whose solution to the Jewish problem was annihilation through total assimilation—was brought by his conviction of the wrong done to Dreyfus to call into question his own apparently deepest convictions. The handling of the *Affaire* by the assimilationist élite of French Jewry (whose own dilemmas have been studied to great effect by the Canadian scholar M. R. Marrus, whose book is a

[1] *Bernard-Lazare: Antisemitism and the Problem of Jewish Identity in Late Nineteenth Century France.* By NELLY WILSON. Cambridge University Press, £12.50.

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curious omission from Dr Wilson's bibliography) did not satisfy Bernard-Lazare. They would be content with mercy; he wanted justice. But it was the French Left, particularly the Socialist Left, which contributed most to his disillusionment. Jean Jaurès was particularly open to the charge of allowing anti-Semitism to tinge his socialism. With few exceptions, the non-Jewish members of the Left intelligentsia did not rally to the cause until they became worried about the threat to the Republic itself.

Bernard-Lazare himself was moved by his view of the *Affaire* to become a Zionist and to identify himself with the persecuted masses of Eastern Jewry. The parallel with Theodore Herzl is striking. Yet the two men were very different and the alliance did not last. Bernard-Lazare became impatient with Herzl's belief that diplomacy would bring about an agreement with the Sultan of Turkey and give the Jews a juridical status for the construction of their national home. It meant dealing with rulers who tyrannised over their own subjects. It repeated the error of the assimilationists who felt that safety lay in identifying the Jews with ruling élites of their host countries.

The struggle for a national home could, in Bernard-Lazare's view, only be justified if it was part of a general struggle for Jewish rights and for the rights of all people. There could be no justice for Jews in an unjust society; their cause was bound up with the cause of the oppressed—workers and peasants—even if the latter did not see it that way and were ready to have their energies diverted into Jew-baiting. It was a return to anarchism after a Zionist detour. Nor was this the last unexpected ideological shift in a tragically short life. Bernard-Lazare's final foray into politics was as an opponent of the anti-clerical legislation of the Combes government which found him on the same side as some of the most vocal of the anti-Dreyfusards. As a power seeking to use the state to pursue its own ends, the Catholic Church had to be resisted; as a group seeking to retain their freedom of worship and preferred forms of ecclesiastical and educational organisation, Catholics had to be protected.

Dr Wilson is a literary scholar, not an historian. Her strength lies not in social analysis but in the collection and study of texts. Yet she does illustrate in the writings and fate of one tormented Jewish intellectual some important aspects of the history of the Jews in France, and gives one some important material for understanding the fate of French Jews under Vichy and the Nazi Occupation and their later inability to offer effective resistance to the anti-Israeli aspects of French policy under de Gaulle and his successors.

FOR A SHORT TIME during his Zionist period, Bernard-Lazare worked closely with Emile Meyerson, a principal figure in the Jewish Colonisation Association which was the creation of Baron Edmond de Rothschild, the principal figure in Simon Schama's study of the Rothschild contribution to the building of the National Home.[2] Yet the Rothschilds belonged to, indeed symbolised, precisely that element of moneyed Jews whom Bernard-Lazare found most antipathetic—nor did Baron Edmond succumb to the Herzlian enthusiasm for political solutions. The Rothschild colonies (which continued a separate existence through the period of the mandate and into the early years of the State of Israel) were the creation of what can only be styled super-philanthropy. The Jews suffer through the unnatural style of life forced upon them by centuries of confinement to the ghetto—what could they achieve if given land and the means to fructify it? It was a major experiment in social engineering, and much of Mr Schama's absorbing narrative is concerned with the events in the colonies themselves, the difficulties of transforming the colonists into the yeoman-farmers of the Baron's dreams, and the contrast between their true circumstances and the situation as seen from the Baron's distant Parisian salon.

Yet to see it in this way is to take a superficial view only. As Mr Schama shows, the Baron's philanthropy was not launched at random; still less was it simply a means of diverting away from France the fleeing masses of East European Jewry who might otherwise threaten the position that established French Jews occupied in French society—after all, unlike Bernard-Lazare's ancestors, the Baron's had not lived in France before the Franks came.

Edmond de Rothschild was first and foremost a believing Jew. As such he was concerned with the welfare of Jews everywhere. Conscious of the lessons of Jewish history, he saw the Russian pogroms as foreshadowing worse things to come. Jews would need a country where they could freely settle and prosper, and through which they could assist the persecuted in each generation. In the meantime why make things more difficult by proclaiming political aims they were in no position to attain? It was better to use whatever respite there might be to learn how to tackle the practical tasks of colonisation and the immediate problems of securing land for settlement. Statehood could wait. And again, the realism of Edmond de Rothschild and his agents on the ground—an interesting group—saw what many in the official ranks of Zionism did not: that Palestine was not an unoccupied land waiting for the Sultan to hand it over as part of some diplomatic deal but a peopled land, and one where progress would only be uninterrupted by violence if the Arab cultivators could be brought within a harmony of interests.

[2] *Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel.* By SIMON SCHAMA. Collins, £7.

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The later separation between Jew and Arab—in the economic as well as the political and cultural fields which set the pattern for the State when it came—should not blind one to the rather complex and intricate interdependence of the two communities in the early period of Jewish settlement.[3]

None of this meant that Baron Edmond was incapable of responding to the Zionist ideal; unlike many men he grew more not less radical with age. By the time of his death in 1934, his identification with the mainstream of Jewish national life was complete. Yet there was a distinction between the Baron and many of the leaders of the community in what was to become Israel. It was impossible for the Baron to conceive of a Jewish identity which was not in its cultural orientation the product of the Jewish heritage—and that meant above all the religious heritage. If one discarded Torah and Talmud what was the point of the long and bitter struggle for separate survival? The normalisation of the economic and social conditions of Jewish life was insufficient in itself; secular Zionism was not enough.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN FRANCE provided the test case for the impact of anti-Semitism in a modern industrial society until its role and fate were overshadowed by the greater tragedy of German Jewry. The Italian Jewish community, smaller, more assimilated, only at times of great tension the object of nationalist suspicions, has figured less frequently in the study of anti-Semitism.

The general assumption has been that Italian anti-Semitism was negligible, that absorption into the host community through conversion and intermarriage was taking place at such a pace that Italian Jewry might virtually have disappeared as a distinctive community within a generation or two when the Fascist régime suddenly took over the ideological aspects of Nazi anti-Semitism and prepared the way for the condemnation of a large part of Italian Jewry to the torment of the Holocaust.

It has further generally been assumed that Mussolini was forced into anti-Jewish measures by pressure from Hitler as the price of the alliance. In Meir Michaelis's *Mussolini and the Jews*,[4] a superb piece of historical investigation which has been years in preparation and has involved the author in archival research in many countries, we now have a different and more complex picture. It is clear that there was an anti-Semitic element in Italian Fascism from the beginning, and that Mussolini's own views swung between anti-Semitic and philo-Semitic tendencies. Italian anti-Semitism was, however, incapable of absolving all the racial aspects of Nazism since these cast doubt on the status of the non-Nordic Italians themselves. The Jewish question was seen by Mussolini in terms of Italy's national aspirations in the Mediterranean rather than as an independent internal issue. The Jewish record in the Italian army made it hard to argue that Jews could not be Italian patriots. Zionism presented a problem only in so far as it challenged the Fascist idea of a "total integration" of the Italian national community.

The most important contribution that Dr Michaelis makes to understanding the actual course of events is to demonstrate that the Germans did not press Mussolini into adopting anti-Jewish legislation; Mussolini voluntarily embarked upon this path in the hope that he would thereby win Hitler's approval and consolidate the Axis to his advantage. The Germans in 1937-38 had more important things to worry about. Dr Michaelis shows (as some other writers have done) how difficult it was to introduce the full virus of racial anti-Semitism into Italy, and emphasises the degree of resistance shown to the anti-Jewish measures by the population at large. The protection afforded to the Jews by the Italians in the part of southern France occupied by the Italian Army between 1940 and 1943, as well as in Greece, is also brought out.

But when the Fascist régime collapsed in 1943, things changed rapidly for the worse. No single group suffered more from the failure of the Allies to move more rapidly up the peninsula after the Italian armistice than the Jews of central and northern Italy. Now the Nazis were indeed concerned to enforce their "final solution" and the Salò Republic was a mere puppet in their hands; though even Fascists of strong anti-Semitic leanings tried at times to prevent the ultimate horrors of the deportations to the death camps.

DR MICHAELIS IS AT HIS MOST CAREFUL when it comes to assessing the much debated role of the Church, and in particular of the Pope, in these crucial weeks and months. The Church's problem began with the move towards conversion by many Italian Jews as a means of escaping from the effects of the legislation of 1938; as Dr Michaelis points out, "the 'new Marranos' were a source of grave embarrassment to the Catholic hierarchy as well as a source of friction between Church and State. . . ." When however it became a matter of saving life rather than of protecting victims of legal discrimination, the Church in general took a stronger line. It is safe to say that such Jews as did survive in Rome and elsewhere did so because they

[3] On the relations between the organisation of the Jewish community in Palestine in the mandatory period and the subsequent institutions of the State of Israel, see *The Origins of the Israeli Polity*. By DAN HOROWITZ and MOSHE LISSAK. University of Chicago Press, £13.30, $19.00.

[4] *Mussolini and the Jews; German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922-1945*. By MEIR MICHAELIS. Clarendon Press, £15.

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were hidden from the *Gestapo* in ecclesiastical establishments or by the Catholic clergy and laity.

The role of the Pope himself is more difficult to assess. But it is obvious that the picture drawn by the German playwright Rolf Hochhuth and others will not stand up to the documentary evidence; those who believe that a more public stand by the Pope would have influenced the conduct of the Germans overlook among other things the complicity of the German Episcopate with the Nazi régime. With the evidence now available it is hard to quarrel with Dr Michaelis' own verdict:

> "In sum Pius XII was a diplomat who thought it his duty to keep silent *ad maiora mala vitanda*. His critics may be right that in failing to speak out, he missed an opportunity for regaining stature; but they are wrong in accusing him of 'un-Christian cowardice' or indifference to human suffering. If he was guilty of an error of judgment, it does not follow that his silence was due to unworthy motives; nor is it likely that in 1943 a 'flaming protest would have saved the life of a single Jew.'. . ."

In fact four-fifths of the small Italian Jewish community survived; but the blow to its morale was cruel. Thousands abandoned the community in favour of conversion and total assimilation; and others emigrated.

> "Many of those who remained were physically and spiritually broken. The habit of Jewish life had been interrupted and in many places its setting had disappeared. Thirty years after the fall of fascism, Italian Jewry is still only a shadow of its former self."

In reading Dr Michaelis' painful book one is again, as so often in Jewish history, reminded of the extent to which the Jewish people have been victims of great movements and great decisions over which they have had no control. The tension between Church and Synagogue may be permanent, but the rest is governed by the marching and countermarching of great armies and the rivalries of major powers. And often there are ironies of fate to which mere historical narrative can hardly do justice.

THE GREAT APPEAL OF ZIONISM through all its phases has surely been that it provides, or seems to provide, a way in which the Jews can recover responsibilities for their own destinies, can become actors on the historical scene not merely victims. Yet even the history of Zionism is also fraught with irony. The Jewish colonies in Palestine so painfully launched in the three decades before the First World War, as well as the older resident Jewish communities, might have suffered deportation and the fate of the Armenians had it not been for the intervention of Turkey's ally Germany. While some action by individual German representatives was due to humanitarian feelings, German policy was affected in part by the hope of playing the Zionist card. Indeed we know that a very important reason for the issue of the Balfour Declaration was the fear in London that otherwise the Germans might make a similar move in order to win over Jewish sympathies abroad.

And there was in fact a school of thought in Germany which did consider the possibility of a grateful Jewry as an instrument of Germany's Middle East policy. Yet it is clear from the recent researches of Dr Isaiah Friedman,[5] an American Jewish scholar now teaching in Israel, that there was never any substance to their hopes. It was impossible to offer the Jews any important role in Palestine without alienating the Turkish government which might then seek a separate peace and uncover Germany's southern flank. Between the Turks and the Jews, the Germans were bound to choose the Turks. In this sense, therefore, the Balfour Declaration was the result of an illusion; it was designed to parry a danger which did not in fact exist.

THE ONLY EUROPEAN JEWISH COMMUNITY of any size that did not fall victim to the Nazi death camps was that of the United Kingdom. And its immunity again owes nothing to itself—it was the consequence of the Battle of Britain and of the failure of Hitler's invasion plans.

How the British would have reacted under German occupation, what kind of Quislings we might have had—these have been the theme of much speculation. But the fact that such speculation leads nowhere does not mean that it is not useful to have studies of Britain's own home-grown anti-Semites in the pre-War period of whom the present-day National Front is a lineal descendent, even though Asian, West Indian and African immigrants have been added to the Jews in its demonology. Dr Gisela Lebzelter, a German Gentile scholar, has made a contribution to this subject which is within its own limits a very useful one.[6] Although she rightly links later anti-Semitic activities to the anti-Alien movement of the late 19th century, she is primarily concerned with the propagation after the War and the Bolshevik Revolution of the myth of a "world-wide Jewish conspiracy", and with the various political parties and other movements which used this as the basis for their own propaganda. From the social origins of the leaders of these movements and of their

[5] *Germany, Turkey and Zionism, 1897–1918*. By ISAIAH FRIEDMAN. Oxford University Press, £7.00.

[6] *Political Anti-Semitism in England, 1918–1939*. By GISELA C. LEBZELTER. Macmillan, £10.

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followers, it is obvious that they had little in common with the social anti-Semitism of the English upper classes of which Dr Lebzelter gives some unpleasantly telling examples. Yet, to some extent, both currents of prejudice fed upon the same stereotypes. What defeated the attempt by the British anti-Semites to utilise anti-Jewish sentiment to capitalise on the 1929 Depression as did many of their Continental counterparts was not merely their identification with régimes regarded as hostile to Britain but also their clear preference for physical means of intimidation as against the Parliamentarianism to which the British people of all persuasions remained generally attached.

Dr Lebzelter naturally devotes much space to the British Union of Fascists. After reading her careful summary of the evidence it is clearer than ever that Professor Robert Skidelsky's attempt to acquit Sir Oswald Mosley of the charge of actively promoting anti-Semitism cannot be sustained for a moment. Mosley's analysis of the Jewish question was ultimately a racial one, though other familiar elements entered in; his own "final solution" was mass deportation—whither was never clearly stated. It was also for Mosley not merely a British problem but a European one in which Britain should take the lead in solving. If it is true that Mosley stressed other themes as well, while his followers stuck to anti-Semitism, this scarcely exonerates him:

> "Mosley himself, as the supreme leader of the movement cannot be released from responsibility for the entire campaign, including its anti-Semitism."

Dr Lebzelter is somewhat contemptuous of the slowness with which the official institutions of Anglo-Jewry awoke to the Fascist menace; some of the parallels with French Jewry at the time of the Dreyfus case come to mind. But in the end it was the reaction of the government itself, prompted by simple considerations of law-and-order, that proved decisive. On the other hand, Left-wing politicians (as more recently) were prone to accuse the police of sharing in the prejudices of the fascists and as being consequently unwilling to extend full protection to their victims. The dilemma of even the most even-handed of policemen—when one side is trying to provoke violence, and the other contains at least some people trying to make political capital out of that violence—is not an enviable one.

The position was further complicated (as Dr Lebzelter is aware) by the arrival of refugees from central Europe and by general fears of a further influx. It made it impossible for the Jewish community to regard its own struggle as self-contained. That a move towards Zionism was one possible outcome of the situation was as true of Britain in the 1930s as of Bernard-Lazare's generation in France. But in Britain, in the 1930s, this aspect of the matter was further complicated by the concurrent debate over the Mandate for Palestine and British policy towards the National Home. The only obvious defect of Dr Lebzelter's otherwise comprehensive study is the absence of any consideration of this problem. The reader will search the index in vain for the names of Sidney Webb, Malcolm MacDonald, or Neville Chamberlain, let alone those of their official advisers, civil and military.

IT IS ALWAYS, and no doubt truly, argued that Britain's unwillingness to fulfil the Mandate in the spirit in which it was conceived was due primarily to inadequate military strength; Britain no longer possessed the power to forward Jewish immigration against the wishes of the Arab majority. Nevertheless, one must also ask whether the pro-Arab policy which came to be adopted was entirely uninfluenced by the existence of anti-Semitic feelings in a very different class of society from that which provided Mosley with his recruiting ground. Or, looked at another way, did impatience with Jewish pressure to fulfil Britain's obligations (and to allow Palestine to remain open to the refugees from an increasingly Nazi-dominated Europe) stimulate anti-Semitism in political and official circles? Since the Jews got in the way of the policy of a Great Power which was perfectly rational from its own point of view, is it surprising that they were disliked? It is hard otherwise to explain how, even after the full horrors of Hitler's *Endlösung* were beginning to trickle through, British officials could display the indifference to the fate of the survivors of which Dr Michaelis gives some very disturbing examples. British Jewry survived the political anti-Semitism chronicled by Dr Lebzelter, but other Jews who might have been saved were to perish because of British policy though not at Britain's hands.

WE CAN SEE SOMETHING of the anguish that this represented for Jews in Britain in the career of Baron Edmond's son, James, who took over the Baron's work in Palestine. James de Rothschild, though serving in the French Army in the First World War, had studied at Cambridge and had married into Anglo-Jewry. He became increasingly identified with England rather than France, and was naturalised in 1919. In 1929 he became a Liberal Member of Parliament and held office briefly as a junior minister in the final months of the Churchill War-time coalition (not, as Mr Schama states, in the subsequent "caretaker government"). It would be difficult to imagine a more anglicised Jew—a prominent figure in English society, English politics, and English sport. Yet it fell to him

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to voice the protests of Jewry against the watering-down of the Mandate, notably in the case of the infamous White Paper of 1938. It was, of course, possible to do so without raising the question of his own "identity" by taking the line that some other British politicians, both Jew and Gentile, took then and even after the War: namely, that a prosperous Jewish Palestine could be an element of strength rather than of weakness in Britain's position in the Middle East, that the Commonwealth could even include a "Jewish Dominion." But having lost his Parliamentary seat in 1945, James de Rothschild could avoid having to debate Ernest Bevin's hateful policies and the events leading up to the British withdrawal, and could instead devote himself to bringing to final fruition the work of his father in what now became the State of Israel.

While some Gentile pro-Zionists shared these views in the 1920s and 1930s, the British officials of mandatory Palestine with few exceptions took a contrary stand. Many of them were deeply anti-Semitic and much affected by the common identification, in the early years of the British occupation, of Jewry with Bolshevism. Others were influenced by their Roman Catholic connections. But perhaps the most important factor, as Bernard Wasserstein has shown in *The British in Palestine*,[7] was their view that the Arabs of Palestine (for whom they had none of the romantic admiration that Englishmen have extended to the Arabs of the desert) required their protection if they were not to be swamped by the incoming Jews, more capable and better organised.

IN SO FAR AS CONCESSIONS were made to Arab opinion and the implications of the Balfour Declaration watered down, this was not the result of anti-Semitic feelings on the part of the Palestine Administration. British policy was decided in London; and only after the riots of 1929 was a Colonial Secretary found, in the person of Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield), ready to repudiate the original British commitment. On the other hand, the constant pressures exerted in London by Chaim Weizmann and others upon British civil servants and politicians did no doubt help to produce a reaction against Jewish claims and against their spokesmen.

Dr Wasserstein is also right to remind us of the difficulties which faced those British Jews who believed that they could serve both Britain and their Jewish co-religionists by taking posts in the Mandatory administration. As with the Arab officials, their position between their own community and the requirements of British policy was an ambiguous and often an impossible one; but unlike the Arab officials they had also to cope with the overt dislike of their Gentile colleagues. The sympathies which some of them professed for a bi-national Palestine did not protect them in this quarter, or from Arab obloquy even though it did expose them to criticism from more single-minded Zionists.

IT IS, THEREFORE, IMPOSSIBLE to treat anti-Semitism as something unaffected by the political repercussions of Zionism even before the creation of the State of Israel. Whether it be Britain, or France, or Italy, or indeed the Soviet Union—any other country with interests outside its borders—policy with regard to Jews and public attitudes towards Jews cannot be dissociated from these interests. With these experiences and their often tragic consequences in mind, knowing as one does how both the hopes engendered by emancipation and those awakened by Zionism have been frustrated, it is curious to come across the innocent optimism of an American Jew.

Milton Konvitz is a distinguished authority on the American constitution and upon the jurisprudence of human rights in their American context. His new book, *Judaism and The American Idea*,[8] also reveals him as a devoted student of Judaism. He is well aware of the new element in the Jewish condition brought about by the creation of the State of Israel and the double standard of morality applied by the international community to Israel as compared with other new States. Yet he seems to feel that the special character of the United States, its own revolutionary and pioneering past, its Jeffersonian ideology and the general pattern of its institutions, all taken together, mean that the American Jew need suffer from none of the ambiguities of identity and allegiance that have haunted Jews elsewhere.

It is, of course, true that in some respects the Jews as a religious community fit more easily into the arrangements of a society with no established Church and with a commitment to total separation of Church and State. It is also true that the secular religion of the Enlightenment—with its positive attitude towards material accomplishments and the pursuit of happiness in this world—is easier to reconcile with Jewish life-affirming traditions than with the asceticism and other-worldliness of Christianity. Respect for the individual and the acknowledgment of a higher law are obviously part of the Jewish tradition. But to go further and to claim that Judaism and good Americanism are actually identical pushes the argument too far.

[7] *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict 1917–1929.* By BERNARD WASSERSTEIN. Swift Printers, for the Royal Historical Society, £8.25.

[8] *Judaism and the American Idea.* By MILTON R. KONVITZ. Cornell University Press, £7.00, $11.95.

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When Professor Konvitz writes that "the spirit, the inner values, the energies of democracy are right at the very heart of Judaism", one feels that it is a case of special pleading not altogether different (though less damaging) from that of those ecclesiastics in the World Council of Churches who find their Christian beliefs made effective by giving aid to *soi-disant* "freedom fighters."

Nor is it possible that Professor Konvitz, who thinks of himself as "a kind of Hellenistic Jew" devoted to seeking for points of contact between cultures, finds no vestige of a divided allegiance in his own soul. He may feel that there is a single tradition of toleration "rooted in Biblical and other ancient traditions" and in Socratic thought which has descended through Renaissance thinkers and John Locke "down to our own day." But one feels that there is a good deal of special pleading here also. One's doubts are fortified by his listing of Thomas More among the preachers of toleration. True perhaps, if one sticks to *Utopia*; but *Utopia* was utopian. More himself was an enthusiastic burner of heretics and he strongly denied that sincerity of belief was an extenuating circumstance.

Professor Konvitz does in fact recognise the degree to which Jewish self-organisation in the Diaspora after emancipation was largely devoted to the protection or rescue of Jews facing persecution by those more happily placed. Jewish solidarity was felt by Jews in America as by Jews in Western Europe. The history of the American Jewish Committee shows that the struggle against anti-Semitism in the United States itself was almost a by-product of the agitation over the treatment of Jews in Russia. Later, the Committee (like the other major Jewish organisations) added a concern for the rights of other groups within American society. Yet the assumption that this activity is itself a neutral factor in the Jews' own position is an unreal one. If the United States were a static society and an isolated one, Professor Konvitz' belief that it is no problem being a Jew might actually hold good. But the United States is a constantly changing society marked by the upward mobility of successive immigrant and other groups. Jews have played a valiant part in the fight to extend the full privileges of American citizenship to, for instance, the American Negroes. It cannot be said that they have had many thanks for their pains. Nor is this surprising, since given the current situation with respect to both opportunity and achievement, "affirmative action" i.e. "positive discrimination"—which is the present phase of the struggle for equality—results in limiting the opportunities of Jews so as to make room for others.

HITHERTO, IN US FOREIGN POLICY, it has been possible to pursue a pro-Israel policy for a mixture of idealistic sympathies of the kind that Professor Konvitz illuminates, and the shrewdness of politicians seeking the votes of an exceptionally politically active section of the nation. But the link with Israel is fraying under the impact of America's needs as a world power, its struggle for the support of Third World countries, and its paramount commitment to cheap oil. Faced with a choice between two-dollars-a-gallon petrol and support for Israel, most Jews will opt for the latter. Most Gentile Americans will not.

American Jews may find their consciences as heavy as those of British Jews in the last days of the Mandate when Ernest Bevin was turning back helpless boat-loads of refugees from the death camps and when Jewish terrorists were taking their revenge at the expense of British lives. The ambiguity of Jewish existence and the claim to be a people and not just a sect mean that anti-Semitism is inherent in its environment—Christian, or Muslim, or Marxist. *Pace* Professor Konvitz, no Bill of Rights can resolve the problem of Jewish identity.

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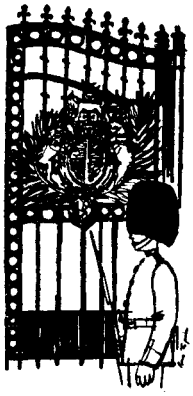
DISCUSSION

"You Celt, Me Neolithic Man"

By R. O. Dennys



IT IS A PITY that even the most distinguished sociologists will try to squeeze the square pegs of history into the round holes of their theories, not hesitating to shave off the inconvenient corners to make them fit. The other tiresome thing about them is that they will use words like "class" without defining what they mean, and as often as not they use them in a pejorative way. Stephen Toulmin's stimulating article, "You Norman, Me Saxon" (ENCOUNTER, September), transgresses on both counts.

First of all we are asked to accept the premise that the present state of Britain is worse than it has ever been. Here Professor Toulmin is a distinguished successor to many distinguished men throughout the ages, who have deplored the decay of their contemporary society since a golden age, long since faded away. Shakespeare makes Westmoreland say to Henry V just before the Battle of Agincourt: "O! that we now had here but one ten thousand of those men in England that do no work today", which seems to indicate that the men of Tudor times regarded a fairly high level of unemployment as pretty normal. Or take Orlando's remarks to the servant Adam:

> *O good old man, how well in thee appears*
> *The constant service of the antique world,*
> *When service sweat for duty, not for meed.*
> *Thou art not for the fashion of these times,*
> *Where none will sweat, but for promotion,*
> *And having that do choke their service up*
> *Even with the having; it is not so with thee.*

Gildas, who wrote *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* about the year 530, took an equally dim view of his own times and denounced in unbridled terms the social scene around him:

> "Kings Britain has, but usurpers; judges she has, but ungodly; [and] priests Britain has, but foolish ones."

It would be tedious to quote further examples. Clearly Britain has been going steadily to the dogs since "a time beyond which the memory of man runneth not."

PROFESSOR TOULMIN, with beguiling siren arguments, seeks to persuade us that Britain today is like an American club-sandwich, with each layer of society visibly differentiated from the one below, and that this derives from a sharp division between the descendants of the Norman conquerors and the descendants of the conquered Saxons. Let us therefore reflect on what happened in the ages before modern genocide was practised.

At some time between 2000 and 1500 B.C. the Celts, led by a warrior aristocracy and armed with the new bronze weapons, began to colonise Britain. We have insufficient knowledge to say what happened to the earlier Neolithic inhabitants, but while it is probable that their leaders were killed in battle or executed afterwards, it is more than likely that those of lesser rank and the peasantry were enslaved to work for their new lords, who no doubt helped themselves to the widows and daughters of the defeated chieftains. By the time the Romans conquered Britain there was a homogeneous indigenous population.

It is now thought that the Saxons (I use the word to include Angles and Jutes) probably began to come to Britain as mercenaries about the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. When the last of the Roman legions was withdrawn from Britain at the beginning of the 5th century, Saxon pressure increased. There followed a confused period of Saxon raids; their advance was halted by Arthur's victory at Mount Badon about 490 (but alternative dates have been suggested); and peace was ensured for about a generation or more.

After that, Saxon expansion continued until they established control over most of England, with notable exceptions in Cornwall and Elmet, while the British kings and their war-bands, and such of their tribesmen as could escape, fell back on the wild hills of Wales and Cumbria. So what happened to the British Celts who had been overrun by the speed of the Saxon advance?

It is significant that Cerdic, the founder of the

RODNEY DENNYS *is Somerset Herald of Arms at the College of Arms. Among his publications are "Flags and Emblems of the World", "Royal and Princely Heraldry of Wales" (jointly), and "The Heraldic Imagination."*

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West Saxon royal dynasty, had a name which probably derived from the Old Welsh name Ceretic. With the exception of East Anglia, where there are very few place-names of Celtic origin, we find Celtic place-names in considerable numbers all over the country; and this is evidence that there was a sufficiently large indigenous population from whom the conquerors learnt the names of local geographical features. There are very many examples. The Laws of Ine (688–95) are evidence that there was a sizeable Welsh (British) element in the population. "If a Welshman possesses a hide of land, his wergild is 120 shillings; if only half a hide 80 shillings; if no land at all 60 shillings", while "a Welsh horseman who rides in the King's service has a wergild of 200 shillings", the same as a Saxon Ceorl.

FEUDALISM WAS unknown to the Saxons, but their social organisation was rigidly hierarchical, the fundamental lines of cleavage being between the *gesithcund man*, or landed nobleman, and the *ceorl*, or lesser freeholder (roughly the precursor of the franklin of mediaeval times). Below him came the *geneat* (roughly equivalent to the later villein), followed by the *kotsetla* or cottar, and the *gebur*, who was slightly better off than the slaves. A glance at Domesday Book will show that there were quite a lot of slaves in late Saxon England, but by the early 12th century slavery had been abolished by the Normans. "You Norman, Me Saxon"—but which Saxon am I?

THE NORMAN CONQUEST was quite different from the preceding tribal settlements, which took place over a relatively long period of time. By 1066 England had become a civilised, unitary kingdom, with an able central government. In this case the conquest was sudden and completed within a few years by those remarkable Normans, tough, efficient administrators, who took over a going concern.

But it would be very wrong to think of the Norman overlords as a self-contained governing "class." There was a very large Breton element among them, as well as many Flemings and quite a number of men from northern France. Moreover, the Saxon aristocracy was not entirely eliminated. Most, it is true, were dispossessed of their estates; but there is little firm evidence that they were all killed off. And there are several cases (and more can be deduced) of a Norman lord marrying the widow or daughter of a Saxon thegn, thereby reinforcing his hold on her lands.

In the early years of the Norman occupation it is indeed the case that charters were addressed "*to all my men both French and English*", but they would all be regarded as equally the liege men of the lord. The concept of the "Nation-State" is an unfortunate modern aberration; loyalties then were personal. Walter Map, writing around 1200, said that Henry I, who married the grand-daughter of King Edmund Ironside in 1100, "by intermarriage and by every means in his power bound the two peoples into a firm union. . . ." From William I onwards the kings described themselves as "*King of the English*", gradually changing to *King of England*. Henry I addressed his charters to "*all his barons, French and English*", which presupposes that some of them were of English (Saxon) descent, as indeed was the case. Several English families, still existing, can trace their descent from a Saxon ancestor such as the Nevills, now Marquesses of Abergavenny, who descend in the direct male line from Uchtred; or the Berkleys of Berkley Castle, who descend from a Saxon ancestor, Harding; and there are others.

By 1215 the two peoples had been welded into one, and the King's greetings clause in the Magna Carta makes no distinction between French and English.

THE REALLY IMPORTANT social change introduced by William the Conqueror was feudalism. Like so many importations into this country it soon became adapted to local circumstances and, before long, developed in a way which was markedly different from that which persisted in the homeland of feudalism across the Channel. Professor Toulmin would be right in thinking that the military society created by feudalism had a profound effect on later social attitudes. But we should also remember that while a lord had certain rights, he also had certain obligations: to his overlord on the one hand and to his undertenants and men on the other. It is, I suggest, this ingrained sense of responsibility and service—coupled with the assumption that they had a duty as well as a right to run the country—that influenced the attitudes of the English gentry throughout subsequent centuries.

WAR IS THE SUPREME social catalyst, as we have seen in our own day, and the Hundred Years War was no exception. When you add to that the Black Death and its subsequent recurrences you have the ingredients for social change. The rewards for good service at the end of a campaign took the forms of grants of land, relief from the payment of rents, gifts of money, or appointment to lucrative offices. These were not only bestowed on the barons, knights and gentry, but extended to the yeomen and those of humbler status. Add to these the ransoms obtained by soldiers of all ranks, and you get considerable

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social fluidity as a result. The Wars of the Roses decimated the higher aristocracy, but left the country gentry and humbler folk comparatively untouched, so that new men rose to the top when the Tudors restored order, and overseas trade was opened up. The Heralds played an important part in the social changes of that period.

The remarkable thing about the English has been the high degree of social fluidity in this country, right through the Middle Ages and down to modern times. As a working genealogist (with many hundreds of pedigrees behind me), I find that the rise and fall of English families is something which one comes to recognise as the normal pattern. Some families which have attained exceptional eminence have managed to hang on to their estates and wealth; others have fizzled out in a few generations. On the whole, the gentry have usually managed to maintain their position, and even when they have gone through adverse economic patches they have usually regained their positions.

WHERE ENGLAND DIFFERS so markedly from other European countries is that trade was never, at any rate from the 13th century, regarded as disparaging to one's social position. So we get the younger sons of the country gentry—the bannerets, knights, and esquires—going to London to study law, and carve out a career in the courts, or being apprenticed to the more eminent merchants, not only of London but also in the provincial cities. Those who were successful tended to buy estates in the country and found families of country gentry.

It is no exaggeration to say that eight out of ten people who today would be regarded as being of "the Establishment" (a useful word, invented by Henry Fairlie, and analogous to the Ascendency of bygone Ireland) have grandparents of humble origin. If we are to accept the proposition that farm labourers and factory workers are of "Saxon" origin, we must accept the even odder proposition that when their grand-children (nowadays, as often as not, their children) make the grade into middle and top management they become "Normans."

CONSIDER, THEREFORE, the real composition of English society. Conditions in Scotland and Wales are not identical because of their largely undiluted Celtic origins. The Celtic peoples of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland retained their aristocratic, heroic form of society until well into historic times, and were uninfluenced by feudalism, although some of its forms were adopted by them.

The fundamental difference between England and the other Western European countries has always been, from the earliest Middle Ages, that there have been no barriers to social movement. In France, down to the Revolution, if one of noble blood engaged in trade he automatically lost his titles and his coat of arms, as well as the fiscal privileges which went with them. That never happened in England. An interesting example of social mobility occurred in 1389, when an English man-at-arms, John of Kyngeston, was challenged to a duel by a French Knight, but he was unable to accept the challenge as he was not of the armigerous noblesse—until King Richard II, by letters patent dated 1 July 1389, granted him that rank:

> ". . . in order that our said liege may be received honourably and may be able to perform the said deeds, [We] have received him into the estate of Gentleman and have made him Esquire and will that he be known by Arms and bear them henceforth as follows, *Argent a Chapeau azure with an Ostrich feather gules*."

The rising men of Tudor times kept the Heralds very busy tidying them up. By this time, the doctrine was evolved that a coat of arms was the outward and visible sign of inward gentility. Armorial bearings did not create a gentleman, but only recognised the fact that a man had become one. This is still the case today, and it has done much to oil the wheels of social mobility. The Tudor Heralds had a pretty stiff means test, coupled with the criteria that the new grantee had to be "a worthy man of good repute and adequate substance"; he had to have "the port, charge, and countenance of a gentleman." Today, the Kings of Arms are authorised by the Sovereign to grant arms "to eminent men, subject to the authority of the Earl Marshal first obtained." The degree of eminence is not laid down, but each case is considered on its merits and treated in a commonsense way.

Since the reign of Edward III the administrative work of England had been in the hands of the country gentlemen and the clergy, the former acting as justices of the peace and sitting in petty sessions and quarter sessions. The parishes were governed by the vestry, presided over by the parson, with the church wardens as its chief officials. The local Government Act of 1888 stripped the country gentry and the clergy of their real power. This was a fundamental revolution in English society; and I suggest it would well repay close study by sociologists. It was not so long ago; and without a violent and bloody revolution social attitudes take time to change.

FOREIGNER AFTER FOREIGNER, through the centuries, has written about the English disinclination for work, so that it is a wonder that anything ever gets done here. But reports of the demise of this country would seem to be premature, for all

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previous critics have been confounded. The springs of our present ills lie deeper, and require a much more careful diagnosis if a suitable cure is to be found.

The breakdown of parental authority is perhaps the most remarkable development, a special phenomenon of the present times. If Professor Toulmin wants to squeeze a "class" argument out of this he may care to reflect on the fact that the gentry beat their children, while the lower orders do not.

The economic and fiscal causes of our present malaise are probably more important than anything else; but there we impinge on politics and political economy, so I must forbear from discussing them.

"You Norman, Me Saxon"

By Stephen Toulmin

NOWHERE in my piece about the extraordinary antagonism between labour and management in England today did I say "that the present state of Britain is *worse than it has ever been*." What I did say is that the present state of social relations in England has *changed surprisingly little* since 1066—surprisingly little, that is, for anyone who sees the essential factors in society as its economic relationships, since these have clearly changed mightily in the last 900 years. And much of the additional material included in Somerset Herald's response only serves to reinforce, expand, and clarify my diagnosis.

Two other disclaimers, before I take up Mr Dennys' constructive points. I am not, and never have been, "a sociologist"—still a dismissive label in England, I realise—much less do I qualify for the category of "even the most distinguished sociologists"! Nor did my argument rest on a confused use of ill-defined terms like "class." On the contrary, my article was concerned with lords and serfs, industrial managers, shop-floor workers and similar occupational groups; and it set out to *challenge*, not to *support*, current assumptions about "class" and "class war." In fact, I share Mr Dennys' irritation at sloppy thinking about "classes" and was trying to locate some of the origins of these confusions.

To summarise the key points of my actual argument: (*1*) The bitterness and irreconcilability to be found in English labour-management relations have few parallels in other industrial societies today. Anywhere else, this state of feelings would be intelligible only in a country under foreign occupation—Greece under the Turks; Québec run from Westmount; or whatever.

(*2*) So, perhaps, that is just what the feelings involved fundamentally rest on: viz. a sense that management really represents "the Norman occupiers" and labour "the Saxon occupied." Did not *management* and *labour* in England simply take over, during the 19th century, a pre-existing social antagonism between lords and labourers dating back at least to feudal times and possibly to *1066, if not before*?

(*3*) If that is so, Engels's misreading of attitudes among the industrial workers of Manchester apparently led him to mistake a social hostility that was specifically English for something universal, and so to invent the inappropriate term "class war" as a general name for the envy and resentment associated with economic inequalities elsewhere.

Mr Dennys' more detailed comments open up two helpful lines of thought, which carry my own questions further. To begin with, he echoes my question, "If as far back as 1066, why not before?", and he hints—even though ironically—that the deeper roots of social hostility in England might go back even earlier than I traced them. For clearly the Normans (Northmen, Norsemen) had more in common with their Germanic cousins, the Angles and Saxons, than either party had with the Celts of Ancient Britain or the Latins of Southern France. So, if Mr Dennys is suggesting that current antagonisms in fact have an ancestry going back to 44 B.C.—i.e. that the labouring population of England has seen itself in the position of an "occupied people" ever since Julius Caesar—that idea would be worth exploring further.

Still: like him, I am on the whole inclined to believe that the crucial innovation from whose after-effects labour and management in Britain are still suffering was *feudalism*. It was feudalism that established the basic attitudes whose currency he confirms: e.g. the idea that "the overlord had a duty as well as a right to run the country." And it was feudalism that created the links between the status of "overlord" and the mode of life of the horse-riding "landed gentry" to which, as he agrees, eminent merchants and other successful men of business have aspired ever since.[1]

My only hesitation has to do with his argument that "those remarkable Normans, tough, efficient administrators . . . took over a going concern"—since that suggests that overlords were nothing new in England.

[1] Incidentally, what subterranean folk memory coined the code name for the 1944 counter-invasion of Normandy from Southern England—viz., Operation *Overlord*?

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AT THIS POINT, it would be interesting to follow up some of the other questions that have been raised in recent years about the social and military consequences of feudalism, in England and elsewhere. The historian Lynn White has argued that the adoption of the *stirrup* was as critical an innovation in early mediaeval times as the invention of the Atom Bomb in the 1940s. Throughout Western Europe, feudalism established itself around the figure of the armed horseman (*chevalier, Ritter*) without whose force the social inequalities of feudalism could never have been maintained. The central questions for our purposes would then be: *first,* the question why the social attitudes associated with feudalism have apparently changed so much less in England than they have in the rest of Europe; and, *secondly,* how they came to be transmitted—so disastrously for ourselves—into the sphere of industrial relations. Could the lack of barriers to "young men of good family" engaging in trade (which Mr Dennys cites as "the fundamental difference between England and the other Western Europe countries") have helped to fossilise English attitudes? If so, how?

One possible answer to these questions occurs to me, which it should not be hard for historians to test. Initially, the industrialisation of Britain was associated (as Professor John Nef has shown) with an "energy crisis" resulting from the exhaustion of the forests, and the new "manufactories" were absolutely dependent on the extraction of both iron and coal. This put key resources into the hands of the landowners, who owned the mineral rights over their estates; and in many cases (e.g. Percys of Northumberland) those landowners were *identical with* the traditional families of feudal overlords.

SUPPOSE THAT we now accept Mr Dennys' contrast between England, where "good families" were involved in trade, and other countries, where that was frowned on as *infra dig*. We might then expect to find that the great landowning families played a substantial part in the ownership and management of the new industrial enterprises of England, while their counterparts in (e.g.) the German nobility merely stood aside and collected licence fees for minerals extracted from their land. (Is that the case? It should not be hard to find out.) In that case, industrial development on the Continent should have been from the start the province of merchants, bankers and the like, so differentiating it from English industry, in which hereditary, territorial "titles"—in both senses of that legal term—went hand-in-hand from the start with industrial power and control.

This scenario, if correct, at any rate provides the connections I have been seeking between today's labour-management hostilities and the earlier *ressentiments* of feudal times. For factory workers were in this way equated (and equated themselves) with "tenants", factory owners with "lords." And so all the old conflicts were perpetuated.

SOME LAST REMARKS:

(*1*) In my article, I was not concerned with matters of "race" or "genes" or "blood" or the like. I was not saying that managers still have predominantly Norman genes/blood/racial origins, and labourers predominantly Saxon genes/blood/racial origins, respectively. That would be silly. On the contrary: throughout English history, terms like "blood" and "race" have repeatedly been used to reinforce anti-egalitarian *social* attitudes, despite all the evidence that they are only partially relevant to the actual genealogical facts.

(*2*) I do hope that Mr Dennys does not really expect us to take seriously his hypothesis that "the springs of our present ills" lie in "the breakdown of parental authority", and are therefore "a special phenomenon of the present times." (What is he telling us—that bolshie shop-stewards and pickets are a product of "over-permissive" upbringing? Come, come!) In any event, that would be to fly in the face of his own evidence that "the English disinclination to work"—which has afflicted "the gentry" quite as much as it has "the lower orders"—is a phenomenon much older than "the present times" and remarked on by "foreigner after foreigner through the centuries."

(*3*) As for his final suggestion, that "economic and fiscal causes" are the key factors in "our present malaise": there he simply repeats Engels's vulgar error, by letting the surface facts of economics distract him from the deeper and longer-standing social attitudes that underlie them.

How rarely and inadvertently are we permitted to glimpse the underlying inequalities built into the structure of English social life! How one welcomes, for instance, Mr Mervyn Griffith Jones's unintentionally revealing question for the prosecution in the *Lady Chatterley* case: "Is this the kind of book you would like to see in the hands of your *maidservant* ?"

I HAD FEARED that the somewhat "cute" title added to my piece in the editorial offices of ENCOUNTER ("You Norman, Me Saxon") might have concealed its serious intent. I am gratified that this did not entirely happen, and that my argument was forceful enough to lure Somerset Herald from his covert in the College of Arms. Few of us who have migrated from England to the United States as adults ever wholly escape the question why the social atmosphere of England finally became insupportable to us: that question continues to nag at us, like a sore tooth. So I am content that the piece should also have touched on his nerve.

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IN THE MARGIN

From Helsinki to Moscow

By Melvin J. Lasky

Helsinki

I CAME HERE armed to the teeth, with pamphlets. "Finlandisation" was the agitated theme that was about to descend upon me, and I had all the literature at hand, a suitcase full of articles, brochures and books, all devoted to the subject which the Finns constantly insist is malevolently misunderstood in the West and which Westerners contend must be more honestly and critically broached if certain other free European peoples are not to fall prey to the danger of being . . . "Finlandised."

I felt especially vulnerable for it was, in point of fact, in these pages of ENCOUNTER that the word "Finlandisation" was first coined (by our regular contributor, Richard Lowenthal, in his series of foreign policy commentaries in the early 1960s). Ever since then it has passed into the vocabulary of international political controversy, keeping polemical company with such loaded ideological metaphors as cold war, *détente*, containment and rollback, balance of terror, neutrality and non-alignment, and the like. I suppose that I more or less agreed with what I thought the general meaning of the term implied—a deplorable state of affairs in which a small and weak neighbour, awed by the military might and political ruthlessness of a totalitarian super-power, makes embarrassing and shameless concessions of its sovereign liberties. With each day in Helsinki I felt the crudeness of this rather narrow approach, and how ill-prepared it had left me for the realities of life as it is actually being lived in Finland.

I WAS SURPRISED, I must confess—and, of course, elated—to find how free and Western and normal everyday things were. Here, in the shadow of a thousand-kilometre frontier with Bolshevik Russia, there was no Muscovite greyness, no East European satellite conformism, no pictures of Big Brother. On the contrary, there was a colour, liveliness and general variety that was closer to Rotterdam or Manchester than to anything one had been led to expect. What, then, had these ingenious opportunists, Paasikivi and Kekkonen, been "selling out"? I rushed out, on the midnight of my arrival, to inspect the attractive and well-stocked shops and was transfixed by the book-stores. Hadn't the Finns, in craven self-censorship, refused to publish Solzhenitsyn? But in one of the windows I looked at there was, perhaps only accidentally, next to the editions of Leonid Brezhnev's speeches some volumes of *The Gulag Archipelago* in English, German, and Swedish and also (if my grasp of Finno-Ugrian translatese was not too faulty) in a Finnish edition published in Stockholm. In an "Economists" display there were also works by Bukharin, Oskar Lange, Schumpeter, Harry Johnson, Ernest Mandel; and among the novelists who appeared to be selling were Moravia, Vonnegut, Bellow, Doctorow, and Grass. No, our Big Brother across the Gulf would have taken no pleasure here.

BOOKS shall make ye free? Not quite. I am only trying to convey my first impression that if Finland has been "Finlandised" I could only wish that this dire fate would overtake the unfortunate Poles, or the silent isolated Balts of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, or indeed the Czechs and the East Germans. That the Finns are paying a price for their "bourgeois liberties" is undeniable. The costly concessions range from the enforced purchases of Soviet goods in disadvantageously rigged East-West trade agreements to hypocritical neutralistic noises in foreign-policy pronouncements; a few politicians and journalists are shamefully considered *non grata*; the President rushes to pay deference to the Kremlin leadership at the first sign of difficulties or complications (Finland's increasing commerce with the Common Market, or her leanings towards Scandinavian solidarity, or whatever). But there is no Russification; I hardly saw a Soviet sign or photograph and met nobody who knew anybody who was studying Russian in the schools. (English has replaced German as the main foreign tongue for international contact, even between Finns and Swedes: although the old ruling-class language is still given equal place in all public sign-posting.) There are no political police, no midnight arrests, no political prisoners of any kind. The local Communists are a minority party (three of them, if you reckon the factional splits), and are of no great influence. Kiosks everywhere sell the free newspapers and periodical press of the entire world. No conversation or discussion I participated in had the slightest shadow of fear or anxiety over it; nobody

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was afraid of a political joke or a cutting remark. I may have kept looking over my shoulder, but there was nobody there.

Nor should I forget to mention the affluence of a consumer-oriented society (so despised by the Western Left, so feared by the Eastern Left)—for a sturdy hard-working people has evidently all the opportunities here of enjoying the fruits of their labours. Surely a fairly high standard of living is not the least of the virtues of a free society. But at every turn those two elementary human rights, so taken for granted from the Gulf of Finland westward to the China Sea, overwhelmed me with their near-miraculous presence. The mind could travel, the body could move. Men could read and write as they pleased; and men and women and their children, if the spirit (or the local conditions) so moved them, could pack their bags, cross the frontiers, and seek their happiness elsewhere.

I LEFT still puzzled by a number of important and fascinating questions, none of which I am able to answer, and yet I remain unsatisfied by the explanations provided by the various experts whose books I prudently dispatched back to London from the Helsinki airport before proceeding to the USSR. (What chances for a "Finlandised" Republic of Georgia, the Ukraine, Armenia? . . .)

Is this the best Finland that the process of "Finlandisation"—inevitable, given the Nordic historical and geopolitical factors—could produce? Most of the critics, irritated themselves by the touchiness of the Finns, feel that they often go "too far": that the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line compromises positions where it is not necessary, adopts double standards in foreign affairs (vociferous against the USA in Viet Nam and Chile, silent about the Cubans in Africa) which are demeaning and corrupting, presents only friendly Social Democratic and Conservative faces on their Parliamentary front-benches, and sometimes takes the hints from Moscow to offer presumptuous advice to other European lands to go and do likewise. The West Germans (and the West Berliners) have been especially alert to Lowenthal's "*Finnlandisierung*", and have been alarmed and outraged at the suggestion that they too could have had quiet and freedom if they had, in the years after 1945, accepted Soviet offers for a "benevolent neutrality." Finland is free, they say, only because the rest of us are not neutral, are indeed strong and uncompromising. Only the existence of a powerful NATO, with forces in the Finnish-Norwegian Arctic, gives the Finns that little space for diplomacy in which they can take lightly sinister Soviet proposals for "joint Red Army-Finnish Army manoeuvres" in the area.[1]

THIS KIND OF ARGUMENT is difficult to conduct calmly. The Finns have, in point of historic fact, managed by a hair's breadth to escape the bear's clutches. It was a breathtaking drama; and given all the tensions and uncertainties it is perhaps understandable that they could not have accomplished what they have, in a mixture of luck, accident, shrewd opportunism and tight-lipped persistence, without overstating their achievements and underplaying their concessions. In such a situation it is only to be expected that one tends to insist the bottle is half-full, not half-empty. In a recent interview President Kekkonen flared up when a correspondent pressed him too closely about his readiness to sacrifice domestic freedom of speech and press if it tended to endanger "the best interests of the homeland" (i.e. friendship with the Soviet Union): "Am I in a cross-examination? This is intolerable! I will not be cross-examined! . . ." When our friend Walter Laqueur published a fairly balanced and moderate article on "The Specter of Finlandization" he was deluged with protests from Finland, mostly strident, all deeply wounded. And yet his central message was only a warning to the Finns that their habits of "political adjustment" might well lead to a serious erosion of their domestic political freedom. As for the silly (and probably insincere) chit-chat about a "Finnish model" for other European lands, it need not be taken seriously. It is all too clear that it would be a disastrous and tragic set-back for, say, Austria or the West German Republic, or even Communist Yugoslavia. As for a "Finlandised" Poland or Hungary, it is devoutly to be wished but, alas, only a utopian day-dream of playful Kremlinologists.

AND YET how did the Finnish miracle come about? This was my final puzzle, as I packed my bags for the flight to Moscow, and safely mailed off my political literature, including the shattering documents of the dissident Russian Human Rights groups about psychiatric tortures and the miseries of Siberian exile. Why hadn't the Bolsheviks properly punished the Finns who under the leadership of Field-Marshal Baron Mannerheim fought during 1939–1945 two wars against the

[1] See: Adam M. Garfinkle, *"Finlandisation": A Map to a Metaphor* (Monograph No. 24, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, 1978). V. I. Punasalo, *The Reality of "Finlandisation": Living under the Soviet Shadow, Conflict Studies,* No. 93 (London, March 1978). Walter Lacqueur, "The Specter of Finlandisation", *Commentary* (New York, December 1977), and also his "Reply to the Finns" (May 1978). Erkki Mäentakanen, "The Myth of 'Finlandisation'", in *Yearbook of Finnish Foreign Policy* (Helsinki, 1974). For German reactions, see: Interview with President Urho Kekkonen, in *Stern* (Hamburg, April 1979) and Carl Gustaf Ströhm's article in *Die Welt* (Bonn, 28 April 1979).

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Russian Motherland, the second on the Axis side![2] Why hadn't it been absorbed in the USSR as a "Soviet Republic" like the three Baltic States (and all of them had been a part of Russia, as had Finland for a century as a Grand Duchy of the Czar)? Why didn't it become, at the very least, a "People's Democracy", a satellite state under total Communist and Kremlin control like Bulgaria?

Again, I do not know the answers. None of the historians I have read (from the Kennans to the Crankshaws, Ulams, and Besançons) has offered convincing explanations for those extraordinary moments in Stalinist and post-Stalinist foreign policy when single-minded revolutionary despots have opted for a looser or more "liberal" solution rather than the traditional power doctrine (hold-what-you-have and take-over-what-you-can). Why did they choose to retreat from Eastern Austria, withdraw their Red Army forces, and thus give a neutral Viennese government its miraculous opportunity to be free, independent, prosperous? *Why Finland?*

One of the books I returned to St Martin's Lane for safe-keeping was Khrushchev's *Memoirs*, for he was (in his last years as an old-age pensioner in Moscow) something of an un-person. But his account of the final decision to withdraw Soviet troops from Finland—if the passages are authentic and reliable—does establish the background of the East-West precedent which, if miracles in the recovery of European civilisation are ever to happen again, repays some pondering.

Khrushchev was evidently persuaded that withdrawing entirely from Finland—and there was an air and naval base on the Porkkala Peninsula about twelve miles from Helsinki—would not endanger "our security" (defining this as Marshal Zhukov understood it, and not as Comrade Zhdanov would). He found (or so he said to his *Time-Life* tape-recorder) the fears of the Finns "understandable": "The Finns knew perfectly well that our troops stationed right outside their capital weren't there to make shashlik or go fishing. . . ." The decision was practically made during the four-power summit meeting in Geneva in the Summer of 1955, with Khrushchev and Bulganin and Zhukov agreeing among themselves: "I didn't even suggest the idea of giving up our base in Finland to Molotov because I knew he'd disagree. . . ." The technical strategic question was uppermost. A free and independent Finland, restricted within a "benevolent neutrality" arrangement, would constitute no danger. Troops and fortifications were costly; and they also alarmed the Swedes who might, if the Scandinavian area was not handled gently, turn with the Norwegians and the Danes to the American protection of NATO. The Russians withdrew. "Afterwards we talked the matter over with Molotov. As I expected, he couldn't understand. . . . He put up an obstinate argument."[3] Presumably we will one day be hearing, when Molotov's own Memoirs are published (surreptitiously in the West? via Victor Louis?), the story from the other side of the hill. Un-persons have a way of crawling back up the memory hole.

For the time being the fact of the Finnish "Finlandisation" remains tantalising. Is it conceivable that before the end of the 20th century other withdrawals, on the basis of very sound security calculations and against all obstinate argumentation, might be made? If Finland is considered safe, bordering on neutral Sweden, why couldn't Hungary be safe on the borders of neutral Austria (as, possibly, Austria was considered safe on the Swiss border)? If Chairman Khrushchev was tempted by the idea that "territorial claims" and "forcing socialism at bayonet point" was useless and undesirable, may not others be similarly tempted before the year 2000?

If for some, then, "Finlandisation" is a spectre haunting Western Europe, for others it may be a gleaming hope in a dream of wriggling half-free. If the Finns had a unique opportunity, and used it well, is it altogether vain to speculate that there might well be, in the cunning passages of history, other opportunities for other peoples in other circumstances? May "Finlandised" Finland prove to be a model for all of Eastern Europe! One would like to continue to believe in miracles.

Moscow

WHAT IS IT that I am supposed to be doing here? How is it that I am here at all? The official East-West exchanges have their strange ways. Usually some of the "best and brightest" of the Soviet intelligentsia are sent off to the USA in order to learn diligently how to "catch up and surpass", as Lenin and Stalin vowed to do, the hated bourgeois societies of

[2] The paradoxes and ironies of this are, in a brief visit, difficult to grasp and master. In the old Synagogue of Helsinki there is in a place of honour the wreath which Baron Mannerheim bequeathed to the Jews of Finland for their patriotic military service in the hostilities against Soviet Russia. The Finnish Jewish soldiers had been brave in battle; and their families had been grateful that the Finnish authorities resisted every Hitlerian attempt to export anti-Semitism (and worse) to their Nordic ally. But presumably the cloth they wore and the arms they bore were from the Third Reich! . . . Everything in Finland is a tone more complicated than Sibelius had led us to believe.

[3] Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament* (tr. Strobe Talbott, preface by Edward Crankshaw, 1974, Penguin ed.), vol. 2, pp. 268–70.

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the capitalist world; in return for which the West was persuaded to send some of their most sensitive scholars in the field of mediaeval and early modern church architecture to Russia and, sometimes, Samarkand. I once met an efficient young American lady who was an East-West exchangee for several years in the USSR and she had been invited to help Russian librarians set up an orderly new system for the classification of all important papers and documents in a scientific system of archives. She did so. But I was rather disappointed when I learned that she had boxed and filed and numbered and cross-indexed, but had never taken so much as a peep at the material itself.[4]

And now it was my turn. I prepared a lecture for the University of Moscow, and another for an Institute in Leningrad, and some additional notes for a seminar in Kiev. But if I understand the matter correctly, there were some difficulties at the University, and the Director of the Institute was ill, and the seminar had to be postponed. No matter. I would meet editors and intellectuals in "informal" meetings, and that certainly would be productive enough. On arrival at the Hotel *Ukraina*, a Stalin-style skyscraper whose aesthetic has only improved with the years, I locked away my manuscripts in my fail-safe Samsonite case (no point writing only for the secret-police archives); put a long scraggly beard-hair between my paperback copies of *Dr Zhivago* and Nadezhda Mandelstam's *Memoirs* (one imagines one has to be that careful); and exchanged a few rouble notes for a lot of kopecks (so that phone calls could be made in a public telephone cell at least a stone's throw away on the Kutuzovsky Prospect). Was I beginning to play *their* game? If I were to be simply myself (as I so wanted to be), who then was I?

IT WAS THE FIRST DAY of my first visit to Moscow, to Russia, and I had to register the experience as "deeply moving." A perfunctory bit of sentimentalism? Perhaps. Of course, to be in Red Square and look across the wall into the Kremlin can be said to be exciting, in the conventional ways of the tourist who may find himself in the land of the Pyramids or in the Temple of the Thousand Buddhas. No, that wasn't it. Nor was it, at the other end of spiritual adventure, that melodramatic search for "Roots" which has in our day become the new mode for establishing a deeper identity, for finding oneself and one's true sources. That wasn't it either. My sense of curiosity, of fascination, and in a way of fulfilment in being here is neither so superficial nor so profound. I confess that I have very little talent for sight-seeing, and so the extra heart-beat comes not from first glimpsing the ancient towers of Muscovy. Nor do I bear the wounds of some uprooted identity crisis which would painfully bleed again by standing on the ancestral land of my forefathers, on the vast Russian plains where they once tried to eke out an existence, some to leave an unhappy Czarist homeland to seek freedom abroad, others to perish hopelessly in the pogroms and gas-chambers of cruel neighbours.

I spend a half-hour in the hotel lobby studying the map: so there's where Lodz is, and Omsk and Tomsk. Oh, none of us can escape history, can turn one's back on the past which once involved us in hope and tragedy. Indeed I can recall my very first "political memory" as a young boy growing up in New York: it was my mother's story of fear and trembling, when she was a little girl in then-Russian Poland, in the terror of those anti-Semitic days in the Pale after the repression of the Revolution of 1905.

If it is a kind of "burden of history" which I seem to be carrying here, then it is one which is, willy-nilly, more abstract and intellectual. It has more to do with the pains of cultural and ideological experience; it has to do with the personal education of my whole generation, the so-called New York intelligentsia which thrashed about for half-a-lifetime in the sparkling waters of ideology, "marvellous decades" of our own, in days when the Bronx and Brooklyn were really a *rayon*, a province, a part of Bolshevik Russia!

WHAT HAD BEEN so special about "the Russian Question" that held us so long and so disputatiously in its grip? Was it merely because so many of our grandfathers had been preoccupied in the old Russian *Shtetl* with fine Talmudic dialectics? (But, then, there was George Frost Kennan whose lifelong preoccupation with Russian history and politics had completely different roots: perhaps the memorable experiences of his namesake and uncle, the other George Kennan who wrote a book of his visits to political prisoners in Siberian camps during the Czarist régime. . . .)

Could it be that "the Russian Question"—and the necessity for each of us always to take "a clear position" on it—was indeed a turning inside-out of the grand questions which have tormented men's minds throughout history? In *Karamazov* we used to find the Russian mirror-image of all our Western talk, the talk about what Dostoevsky called "the eternal questions"—

[4] For a sharp critique of "Soviet-American Academic Exchange", see the article by Robert F. Byrnes in Leo Labedz' *Survey* (Autumn 1976): ". . . Such exchanges remain a primitive form of barter or horse-trading, an artificial and unnatural arrangement with a quota system and a restrictive spirit, with access to a laboratory balanced against access to a library, and reciprocity, not equity or mutual advantage, being the guiding factor." As Byrnes points out, ". . . more Poles studied in Western Europe in the sixteenth century than do today. . . . [In the last two decades] more students from Iceland than from the Soviet Union studied in the USA. . . ."

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". . . talking about nothing but the eternal question. . . . What do you believe, or don't you believe at all? . . . Of the eternal question, of the existence of God and immortality. And those who do not believe in God, talk of socialism or anarchism, of the transformation of all humanity on a new pattern. So that it all comes to the same. They're the same questions turned inside out. . . ."

Did that history have a meaning? Could a utopian dream of establishing a good society on earth ever be realised? Was revolution, rather than reform, the proper means for advancing humanitarian purposes? Would great and needed changes first take place in One Country, which might be backward, or in an Advanced Country which had the shiny technology, or everywhere at once in a World-Revolutionary overturn? Were the virtues and vices of men and women determined by historic social systems and thus changeable, malleable? The Marxist-Leninist revolution of October 1917 put these, and so many other issues, on an urgent agenda. And we had to work through the items on the agenda point by point.

OVER A SMALL ice-cold vodka K.L. warns me genially to put my old book-learning away. Forget about "the Russian question", there is no such thing; there are only the Russian answers. M.W. begins to tell me a little—with an astonishing absence of rancour or bitterness—about her own fifteen years in a Siberian labour camp. We sit around in small cramped kitchens for hours, listening to Gulag stories. In dark crowded corridors are unframed painted canvases, collected for art exhibitions which would never take place. In tiny book-lined studies there are piles of manuscripts, chapters of books and translations, which will probably never be published (at least not here, and not in the language in which they were written).

When it all appears to become a bit too much for me (even for an "honorary Russian" who knows the literature from Custine to Ciliga to Dallin & Nicolayevsky, for how much reality can a bookish spirit take?), they promise me a day in the country.

MY OFFICIAL MEETINGS were all very informal, all very polite. I was on my best behaviour with the responsible editors of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, with high officials of the Soviet Writers Union, with the clever academics of Comrade Arbatov's famed Research Institute; and they were hospitality itself.

We exchanged professions of earnestness, sincerity, and respect.

They showed themselves a little worried about the depths of Western indifference to the real achievements of Soviet life and letters. I indicated more than a small concern about the continuance of what Isaiah Berlin had once called "the silence in Russian culture", their own rather bureaucratic and distinctly illiberal approach to all the writers and artists who were seeking some mode of free expression.

They praised their own special principles of true liberty, and gave me a handsomely-printed brochure containing the whole text of the new constitution of the USSR. I suggested, sceptically, that it could hardly be an improvement on the old Stalin Constitution of 1936, and promised them for my own part to send them a copy (foolish, vain offer! where could I ever locate a copy or even a reprint?) of John Milton's *Areopagitica* of 1644: for, surely, that classic plea "*for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*" was still relevant.

How was that again? Yes, I did as a matter of fact agree with Comrade Khrushchev, as he wrote in his *Memoirs*, that the banning of Boris Pasternak's *Dr Zhivago* had been a bureaucratic error (which he had come to regret): it should have been published, as had Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

But couldn't I understand that the toiling Soviet masses were not in the least interested in the private musings of aesthetes like Pasternak and Sinyavsky, or the undesirable porno-prose of young hot-heads of the "*Metropol*" group?

Well, in that case, I ventured to recommend that they proceed immediately to publish a modest edition for all the bookshops and let the authors be judged directly by the readers (and non-readers) themselves. Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf, or anybody else for that matter? Couldn't they understand that fear of ideas and the imagination could only prove to be a force for de-stabilisation in their society? If they were ever to "catch up and surpass the bourgeois world" in its achievements, then they would ultimately have to recognise that only in tolerance is there safety!

But they did not seem to very impressed by the sincerity of my concern for their stability or their safety. "From time to time", as Comrade Kuznetsov of the Moscow literary leadership conceded to me, "we may make a mistake or two, where more prudence and flexibility would have been called for . . . ." But *really*, at bottom, in the end and in the "final analysis", looking at everything *concretely* (and dialectically), they knew best.

AND PERHAPS THEY DID. Even Khruschev, presenting himself in his reminiscences as a liberal post-Stalinist defender of "the creative intelligentsia", was deeply uncertain as to whether Bolshevik power was compatible with intellectual freedom. If culture could not thrive "at the point of

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a bayonet", was it possible to conceive of the Russian cultural territory being given a freer "Finlandised" status? He could go so far as to write:

> "... I did nothing, and now I regret it. When dealing with creative minds, administrative measures are always most destructive and non-progressive .... To this day I haven't read [Pasternak's] book and therefore can't judge it .... To judge an author and to judge his work are two different matters. If the book was really of low artistic quality, then that judgment should be left up to the reader .... The main point is: readers should be given a chance to make up their own judgments; and administrative measures, police measures, shouldn't be used. A sentence should not be pronounced over our creative intellectuals as though they were on trial.
>
> "In connection with *Dr Zhivago*, some might say it's too late for me to express regret that the book wasn't published. Yes, maybe it is too late. But better late than never." (vol. 2, pp. 111–12)

Yet a régime which has never dared to risk legitimising itself through popular elections (as Commissar Moshe Piyade once said to me, "What if we *lose*? ...") has to live constantly in fear of real and imagined dangers from the one and the many. Who can know where true safety lies, or what will rock the boat, or who might start the avalanche, or where a small springtime thaw might lead? On the famous "Thaw" period of the 1950s, Khrushchev confesses:

> "... We were scared—really scared. We were afraid the thaw might unleash a flood, which we wouldn't be able to control and which could drown us. How could it drown us? It could have overflowed the banks of the Soviet river-bed and formed a tidal wave which would have washed away all the barriers and retaining walls of our society ...."

This is the conventional wisdom of the fearful despot in all history, and never put with more breathtaking understatement than in Khrushchev's conclusion: "From the viewpoint of the leadership, this would have been an unfavourable development."

Where Khrushchev trembled, would Brezhnev dare to tread? I decided to withdraw my offer of *Areopagitica*. It might have helped to stabilise capitalism, but obviously it could only serve to subvert communism. The commissars did know best: arranging for darkness at noon is no easy job. Still, I was tempted, at midnight in a flat on the Ulitsa Chaikovskovo, to make a last sunny offer which they could not refuse. Why don't I arrange for the translation of some of the stories and poems in the "*Metropol*" anthology which was turned down by the highest committee in the land as being "just too boring ... just too filthy ...."? And why don't I publish from a spokesman of the highest committee in the land a full, and if need be devastating, critique of the wayward paths of the new pornotedium? I put it to my dinner companion, Vladimir G. Kuznetsov, First Secretary of the Moscow Writers Union, and he said: "Why not?"

Would he write it himself? He would. Soon? In time for the next number of ENCOUNTER, if I would tell him the deadline. I told him. And how long? Oh, say, ten-to-twelve manuscript pages, or a bit longer if he really warmed to the subject. In Russian, or already translated into English? Either, or both, as he wished. Done.

WE SHOOK HANDS firmly, warmly, enthusiastically. We drank another vodka to the spirit of peace, friendship and coexistence. He mentioned something about this being our own "SALT 2" agreement, and laughed disarmingly. I said I preferred to think of it more sharply as our very own "*Pepper 1*", and grinned sheepishly. He carefully folded the memo-pad paper on which I had scribbled the "safest editorial address" for the arrival of ENCOUNTER manuscripts, and put it into his diary. Keep watching this space.

MY PROMISED DAY in the country with friends was very idyllic, very Turgenev. Nothing surely had changed here for a century (although we could make out in the far distance—on a Sunday!—a lone tractor ploughing a field). The Moskva on a bend some 40 miles out became almost a trickle. The dry grass was a modest green, the bright sun was unobtrusively warm, passing couples were inspired to take a quick dip into the river, we sipped our tepid Crimean champagne where only a fortnight ago picnic bottles had been properly chilled by being buried in the deep snow.

A charming young Russian woman spoke languorously of a visit last year to New York, and there was nostalgia for Manhattan in her eyes. A bearded architect from Riga wished only that he might one day get across the Baltic to Sweden or even Finland and catch a glimpse of "truly modern design." A Frenchman outlined his plans to take a canoe down a half-dozen unknown rivers in Siberia but wondered whether his contacts in the KGB would ever manage to get him the official permission. But the Austrian journalist vowed to stay put in Moscow, not to move, not to be distracted, to avoid all politics like the plague, and just immerse himself utterly in the life of the people. When we took in loose ambling groups our obligatory walk, wandering a few miles up the muddy river banks, we spotted on a nearby hill,

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inaccessible "on the other shore", a handsome ruin of an 18th-century church. We greeted it by waving our walking sticks and gnarled tree branches half-reverently in the air, in vaguely theological gesticulation, all of us taking an equally vague oath to return to this spot one day and see to the ruin's proper restoration. We sentimentally dedicated the moment to Solzhenitsyn, the *ayatollah* in distant Vermont.

ON THE WAY BACK we were crowded off the roads every few miles by the black speeding limousines, shining *Zis* vehicles with dainty white lace curtains, carrying the high and mighty to some secret conference or *dacha* or airport. We swerved off the concrete on to the soft-shoulders, but cut right back on to the highway for the patrols did not take kindly to anybody or anything lingering along this obviously very official route. Along some of the stretch there were high wooden fences . . . "and beyond that one, in a *dacha* hidden by the trees", I was told in a whisper which even after 25 years did not sound too anachronistic, "lived Stalin . . . ."

I was seduced by curiosity, and made a detour with one of my friends to get inside at least one of the gates: an improvised invitation for "a quick drink" (as if it were cocktail-time in some normal suburbia) with Victor Louis, the famed Russian correspondent of the London *Evening News* and intriguing confidant of the Kremlin. We parked outside a brightly coloured converted barn, with room to garage seven automobiles, only one of which was visible, a spectacular Mercedes. Victor Louis offered us properly mixed and correctly chilled martinis. He had just completed a new book—on the menace of China—and he was sure that it would interest us. We had a small "ethnic" altercation about his interpretation of Western foreign-policy attitudes towards Russia: which stubbornly insisted that it was "all in Polish hands"—because of a Pope who was born Karol Wojtyla in Cracow? or a Washington adviser named Zbigniew Brzezinski? I expressed admiration for the exotic lushness of the vast garden (incl. tennis ct. and swmg. pl.) and for the Imperial splendour of his collection of Russian antiquities. His English wife chatted about some of the difficulties of educating their young children between Moscow and London. When it was time to say good-bye he said a few nice words about the ENCOUNTERs which lay displayed on his desk like so many coloured Russian Easter eggs. Before I could harbour the suspicion that some secret collecting-point had made a fast delivery for the occasion, my friend assured me that he was indeed a subscriber, a regular reader.

A FINAL official invitation, to the offices of *Inostrannaya Literatura*, the official monthly journal of the international publishing house which also publishes in English, French, German, etc. The old open court, in part now a parking lot, looks out at the palatial 18th-century town house in which Tolstoy's "Rostov family" is supposed to have lived. The editors I meet are all nice, stout, and very polite ladies in flowered dresses. They tell me of the vast circulation figures of their magazines; I mention how small my own is. They praise the magnificent work of Soviet translators in making available the whole of the world's literature to millions of readers; I chat a bit about the difficulties of Proust in English, of Shakespeare in Schlegel-Tieck's German, of Vladimir Nabokov's rendering of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. They tell me of their elation at the "surprising success" of so much of what they publish (I get the text of an effusive letter from an aged peasant deep in Armenia who thanks them for their noble communications); I counter only with dismal tales of our own editorial fallibility, although we did take a great pride in spotting rather early on the talent of "Abram Tertz", not to mention Solzhenitsyn.

What am I trying to say, that error is often a path to truth and beauty? Shouldn't I mention that the most memorable verse they had ever published was Pasternak's "Hamlet" poem from *Dr Zhivago* ("*. . . I stand alone./All else is swamped by Pharisaism./To live your life to the end is not so simple.*")? But then only because it was a mistake, for Andrei Voznesensky in an article on Pasternak's translations (January 1968) had quoted it in full and the censors had evidently accepted it as yet another rendering from Shakespeare!

We drink strong tea, and then black coffee, and I tell harmless, pointless stories about the Russian writers I had met in the West: Boris Gorbatov, Vsevolod Vishnevski, Konstantin Fedin, Valentin Katayev. They inform me that only the last is still alive, and they just recently published his "Most Ardent Wish", namely, "For Peace." And they dug out the article for me (about which I have little enough curiosity) in a German translation (*Sowjetliteratur, No. 3, 1979):* it is mostly a tirade against Dissidence, and concludes more peaceably with old, exhausted, decrepit lines from Blok's *Scythians:*

> *It is not yet too late,*
> *put away your swords.*
> *Let us become brothers—*
> *and comrades.*

Is this, then, why I am here, and being so politely received? because the brothers in Washington are about in SALT 2 to begin putting away their swords?

In the end we are all making at least friendly noises about "exchanging poetry and fiction", and the suggestion was even made about ENCOUNTER publishing another special anthology of the "very

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best" in new Soviet writing. Can they be really serious? The last such anthology we put together (by Patricia Blake and the late, lamented Max Hayward in April 1963) was prefaced by lines from Camus, "*Et l'art réunit ... là où la tyrannie sépare*", and included W. H. Auden's translation of dissident lines from Voznesensky:

Laughing at law with its warnings and paragraphs
Art, love and history race along recklessly
Over a parabolic trajectory.

He is leaving tonight for Siberia.
Perhaps
A straight line after all is the shorter one actually.

Well, I was leaving that night for London, and perhaps it was a shade too reckless to agree to all the smiling, civilised offers to get together soon again, to sip tea, gulp coffee, and speak of the beauties of culture. But I could not help wondering, as I crossed again the Tolstoyan courtyard, what "parabolic trajectory" our conversation might have taken if I had begun, as I had mischievously once intended to do, by asking why their correspondent, a Vitali Korotich, who had visited me in London and had affably chatted about art, love and history, went straight home to write:

> ".... Lying in the centre of London, next to the monument to the great British admiral, the magazine ENCOUNTER, with its swollen tendentiousness, is more like a rusty tanker under an alien flag and about to burst at any moment, and with its foul cargo pollute the shores of many lands."[5]

Of course, it could all have been only a matter of misunderstanding through mis-translation, slips that pass in the night.

WE TOOK A TAXI to Peredelkino, a quick and smooth drive in one of the new Russian Fiats (manufactured in the Italo-Russian plant in Togliatti). I visit first the old *dacha* of Kornei Chukovsky, now a kind of private museum but very run-down; and now, after another severe winter, whole sections of the country house seem about to collapse. The great library of children's books is there, but some are waterstained from the leaking roof; and his proud Oxford gown (he had been given, like Akhmatova, an honorary degree) hung a little crooked and dishevelled on the wall. His daughter, Lydia Chukovskaya, whose admirable struggle against the pernicious system of censorship has been of heroic Joan-of-Arc proportions, was alas not there (away for medical treatment: she is almost blind). One began to wonder whether the disrepair of the Chukovsky house and museum was not perhaps a deliberate act of bureaucratic retaliation. Or was one still caught in the "attitudes of the past" when one imagined the Establishment's hatred of Lydia and her circle of incorruptibles? I lingered in the room where Solzhenitsyn had last taken refuge, and drummed my fingers on the wooden table-top where he had written the final pages of the first volume of *The Gulag Archipelago*.

We walked down the road and into the garden of Pasternak's old *dacha*, peered through the windows into the old library, sat on the bench where Olga Ivinskaya had stood tiptoe trying to catch a glimpse (from the outside, as always) of the deceased as Richter played appropriate funereal music on the piano. Were Pasternak's "famous last words" really "*Open the windows. . . .*"? Lev Kopelev says this is the stuff of legends, for had not the dying Goethe supposedly said, "*Mehr Licht*"?

BUT THEN THIS IS a legendary countryside, green with questions. A little further on is the old *dacha* of Konstantin Fedin, once a powerful Establishment figure in the land. Had he truly drawn the curtains on the day (2 June 1960) when people in their thousands came to take leave of Pasternak and he was carried in his coffin past this house?

I remember Fedin in that year when he and Alexander Twardovsky came to London, and both accepted our ENCOUNTER invitation to discuss the possibility of literary exchanges (yet again!) with *Novy Mir*. Twardovsky took me into a corner and liked the idea of our publishing Solzhenitsyn and Sinyavsky ("Abram Tertz"). Fedin never joined us, but chatted on at the dinner table about some fine old pictures he had been seeing in the galleries (which I had taken, at the time, to be an understandable bit of old-fashioned aestheticism). Gladkov says that the curtains were ordered to be drawn "so that the murmur of voices from the funeral crowd would be muffled. . . ." Writing bitterly of all those who were not there (Fedin, Katayev, *et al.*), Gladkov adds: "I began to think of what a wide range of different types of cowardice there is—from the staid, almost decorous variety to the hysterical breast-beating kind, from the

[5] *Soviet Literature* (Moscow, No. 11., 1978), p. 162.

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shamelessly concealed to the hypocritically furtive. . . ."[6]

Small wonder, then, that all the serious conversation of a week in Moscow reduces itself for me into an almost intolerably Russian confrontation of the problems of heroism and cowardice, of "telling the truth" or "living the lie", of good and evil. Even the gossip and small-talk and passing chit-chat seemed to carry a hidden moral burden, as if the whole of everybody's life had been fashioned out of categorical imperatives.

THERE WAS MUCH laughter a few *dachas* down the road at the table of Andrei Voznesensky, wry and ironical chaps that he and Vassily Aksyonov and the other fellows of the "*Metropol*" literary group are. But every second remark at lunch in Peredelkino touched on ethical difficulties, on such—in the West, long since forgotten—fearfully earnest themes as Right and Wrong, and "what is the chief end of man"?

The "*Metropol*" group was in crisis, and could they survive? The anthology of "non-political" literature which had been collected—the assembled copies I had seen looked like incunabula out of pre-Gutenberg times—had on submission been refused official publication. The inevitable Soviet censors expressed their usual alarm and outrage that a manuscript copy had reached a Western publisher, and their usual disgust that any man of letters could be tempted to depart from the Party's doctrinal aesthetic. "*Metropol*" prose and poetry were sedulously non-political: no dissidence, no heresy—but that, when you come to think of it, could be even worse, for it represents the most mortal challenge of all to an ideological despotism, namely, the presumption that there is such a thing as a private life, that men and women have problems and passions of their very own, and that literature could and should devote itself to such personal worlds.

What a triumph it would be for Russian letters if it could see the light of day. As Voznesensky has written,

> *Truth is on strike. Always naked,*
> *—it can't be printed, and if it is,*
> *there's a fig-leaf on it. . . .*

Indeed "pornographic" was the epithet I most frequently heard in angered official circles. It is, arguably, some progress from the times when any disagreeable thought was charged as the product of diseased trotskyite-fascist wreckers in the pay of foreign powers; it is, I suppose, a kind of "catching up."

But if wit and world-wide prestige (they were both kind enough to remind me that they had been published in ENCOUNTER as long ago as 1963) protect Voznesensky and Aksyonov, what will shield the younger unknown "*Metropol*" writers? They are all up against hard-hearted commissars in a power structure who won't think twice (no, correction: they do, nowadays, just think twice) about meting out the same literary lessons as they did to Sinyavsky, Daniel, and Amalrik, and to Mandelstam and Babel before them.

No point in being depressing. Aksyonov spins marvellous tales from the Black Sea. Voznesensky continues to poke fun—

> *Technological counter-revolutionaries,*
> *refuse to eat synthetic caviar!*

When I leave, Andrei gives me a copy of a new American edition of his poems (in which he says, suddenly very sentimental, "the very best things are the pages of notes in the back. . . by our dear departed Max Hayward . . ."). And when I mention that I am on my way over to Boris Pasternak's grave in the local Peredelkino cemetery, he calls my attention to his own lines on the subject. (We had first published them in a translation by Robert Conquest; and I had always taken them to be what they were supposed to be, verses for the 50th anniversary of the death of Leo Tolstoy; but, ah, I never think "dialectically" enough, for they were in truth a covert poetic tribute to his friend and teacher.[7]

> *They carried him not to bury him:*
> *They carried him down to crown him. . . .*
>
> *Now his house gapes, vacant,*
> *tenantless;*
> *There is nobody in the dining room,*
> *Not a soul in Russia. . . .*
>
> *Forests shed their crowns of leaves,*
> *But powerfully underground*
> *Roots twist and thrust*
> *Like a gnarled hand.*

I SIT FOR AN HOUR or so with Lev Kopelev at the grave (where they surely must have carried him up and not down for the crowning). On a gentle slope on a Peredelkino hill the thousands had crowded, swarming past the secret-policemen. Kornei Chukovsky was there and Konstantin Paustovsky, too, of course; and Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuri Kazakov and Bulat Okudzhava. L.K. recalled all the names as on a roll of honour. Songs were sung, poems recited, the bells from the nearby Church of the Transfiguration pealed. In the late evening there

[6] Olga Ivinskaya, *A Captive of Time: My Life with Pasternak* (tr. Max Hayward, Fontana, 1978), pp. 349–354.

[7] Andrei Voznesensky, *Antiworlds* (Oxford University Press, 1967); *Nostalgias for the Present* (Doubleday, 1978).

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was thunder and a violent downpour which put out the last candles still being carried by the faithful who remained.

Was Pasternak "a hero for our time", how courageous a man was he? The question is unfair, unrealistic, unanswerable. When Stalin had telephoned him (in 1934) to ask him about Mandelstam who had been arrested and whose fate hung in the balance, had he done right to muse on about the differences between their poetry and aesthetic theory? Stalin brusquely rang off, commenting curtly: "I see that you simply don't know how to defend a comrade . . .", and Pasternak was plagued thereafter with guilty self-doubts. But even Mrs Nadezhda Mandelstam felt he had done just about the best he could. Everybody knew Stalin to be an irrational monster—for Pasternak to have pleaded passionately on behalf of "Russia's great lyric genius" might well have sealed Mandelstam's fate immediately.

No one knew how to "behave correctly." Even Akhmatova, in order to save her son's life in a Siberian prison camp, wrote lines to praise the Great Leader. Even Mandelstam, whose "secret poem" against Stalin had led to his downfall, tried (in his exile in Voronezh) to compose an ode in praise of the *Vozhd.* No, Pasternak's times were out of joint; and he was like the Hamlet he had translated and interpreted, not a weak and vacillating character but a man who had forced himself to play a role foreign to his nature. The ebullient Lev Kopelev who sat with me on the little wooden bench within the enclosed burial plot reminded me of Pasternak's lines—

My soul, you are in mourning
For all those close to me,
Turned into a burial vault
For all my martyred friends. . . .

ON OCCASION, THERE WAS defiance Russian-style. I remember Max Hayward (who lived and died in a corner of Oxford that was forever a *rayon* of Moscow) telling me of Pasternak's performance at a meeting early in 1948, presided over by the powerful Boris Gorbatov (with whom I myself had had, a few months earlier in East Berlin, a small altercation over Party-line censorship in literature). Max was then a member of the British Embassy and had a seat in the front row. Alexei Surkov rose and began reading a poem denouncing Western imperialism, but was interrupted by loud applause when Pasternak slipped into the hall to take his own seat. Each of twenty Soviet poets proceeded to do their stint about the defence of peace and the struggle against warmongers. When Pasternak rose to recite—and again to wild applause and enthusiasm (this was dangerous and flustered him: as Stalin used to say, suspiciously, "Who *organised* this standing ovation?")—he moved, almost symbolically, down from the stage towards the audience and offered them only (to Gorbatov's obvious distress) "a few old poems." As Max reported, somebody shouted *Shestdesiat shestoi davai!,* or "Give us the 66th!", a reference to a Shakespeare sonnet of which Pasternak had once made a trenchant translation. But Pasternak did not oblige. It was all too agonisingly relevant:

. . . . and art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill.
Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

"Captain ill"—or the "pock-marked Caligula" referred to in *Dr Zhivago*—never made a move against Pasternak for all the quiet provocations of a lifetime (although his successors arrested Olga Ivinskaya and her daughter as soon as he was in his grave).

Why not? What had given him his unusual, mysterious immunity? Is, then, the logic of totalitarian despotism so illogical?

My friends in Peredelkino smile at the naivety of the questions. One refers me to the *samizdat* memoirs of Pasternak's friend, Alexander Gladkov,[8] who was convinced (and offered some evidence for the thesis) that the explanation lay in the superstitious realm of Stalin's devious mind: this poet had a strange dark magic . . .

Poet, keep watch, keep watch,
You must not fall asleep—
You are eternity's hostage
In captivity to time.

A LAST VISIT to Andrei Sakharov. His telephone is still faultily bugged, and in between the clicking and the jamming he squeezes in a clear-toned message to "come at eight." We sit again in the tiny bedroom of his little flat, he hunched under a wall rug in a cramped space between clothes-closet and writing-table, I on the edge of the bed. Mrs Sakharov had not yet returned from an emergency flight to some far-off Siberian outpost in order to give medical help for a hunger-strike prisoner who had just been released (one of the Russian doctors who had protested against the vile use of "psychiatric methods" for political purposes). Three old ladies kept Sakharov company, evidently never leaving him alone (somebody had to be around to spread the alarm in case the *druzhinniki* resumed their harassments). One was

[8] See: Alexander Gladkov, *Meetings with Pasternak: A Memoir* (tr. Max Hayward, Collins, 1977).

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busy cooking, another was reading raptly the pages in a large carton of carbon-copied manuscripts, a third was chain-smoking and sewing.

I looked out of the eighth-floor window at the vista of Moscow and asked him about loneliness and a growing sense of isolation. After all, only a few years ago there had been, somewhere out there, stalwart friends and supporters—a Rostropovich, a Solzhenitsyn, a Sinyavsky. The whole city appeared to be peopled with that great Russian generation of libertarians: Amalrik, Fainberg, Bukovsky, Maximov, Chalidze, Galich, Volpin, Telesin, Zinoviev . . . all gone! How could one not be depressed by such a thinning of the ranks?

His smile was untroubled. "Others", he replied simply, "come forward to take their place. . . ."

I glanced at the shelf-full of technical books, the journals of scientific papers, which almost seemed like forgotten mementoes of the time when he was the foremost physicist in the USSR. "And all those former colleagues, do any of them also 'come forward', sacrifice their privileges, break with the régime, try to do their bit for a liberalisation? . . ." No smile at this, but no bitterness either. He had no complaints. "Many do what they can, in their own places, working to keep some scientific truth alive, keeping their faith with our young students. . . ."

I began to feel that my hard, prepared, very journalistic questions were not quite to the point; but still I had to put my last one. And what about the increasing divisiveness among all the groups of "free Russians", at home and abroad, as they polemicise more and more over such abstract issues as "Westernism" and "Slavophilism"? The divergence had already been marked when he and Solzhenitsyn had their famous exchange of letters in 1974[9]—had not the latest pronouncements from the *ayatollah* in Vermont made the differences sharper, the divergences wider?

The smile returned, still untroubled, as if his inner confidence and tranquillity had roots far deeper than the passing passions of a political moment. (I confess: I was enthralled by the luminosity of spirit in this remarkable man, called "saintly" by some, "a holy fool" by others, but radiating a very worldly, very practical modesty and tolerance.)

"Our differences", he said, "are really unimportant. Solzhenitsyn is the greatest Russian person of our century. When I was seeking to find my way he helped me. He made me free. . . ."

WHEN WE WENT into the kitchen, clothes were still being sewn, manuscripts read, dishes prepared. We had some of the home-made cake and the smoky Russian tea. He put on his little blue beret and accompanied me into the lift, gently motioned with a finger for silence as we passed the ever-alert *concierge* on a half-landing, and used his beret to hail a free taxi for me. I left him there, reluctantly, alone on the dimly-lit *Prospekt*, waving goodbye; and I promised myself to try and recapture the whole moment by finding those lines from *Matryona's Home*[10] and putting them here.

> "We had all lived side by side and never understood that here was that righteous one without whom, as the proverb says, no village can stand.
>
> Nor any city.
>
> Nor our whole land."

---

[9] Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Letter to Soviet Leaders* (Fontana, 1974). For Sakharov's critique and a further reply, see: *Kontinent I* (Deutsch, 1976), pp. 19–38.

[10] Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Matryona's Home,* first published in ENCOUNTER, May 1963.

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LETTERS

Caritas or Taxes

FERDINAND MOUNT (Letters, ENCOUNTER, May) is right; of course I do not believe that he is under the impression that the National Health Service is financed by voluntary donations. The point at issue concerns the nature of the moral basis of our publicly provided welfare services. Mr Mount has stated that he believes that the public provision of medical care, schooling and certain other unspecified services is based on a "sentiment of charity" which he wrongly, in my view, equates with the New Testament qualities of Caritas or Agape. I accept that this underlying "sentiment of charity" exists but believe it to be a spurious growth not only different from but destructive of true charity.

Prior to the inception of the N.H.S. two main systems of delivery of medical care co-existed in Great Britain. One, the Voluntary System, was financed by charitable gifts and regular subscriptions, and the other, the Poor Law System, was funded by local and general taxation. In establishing the N.H.S. we chose to abandon the voluntary system and to make virtually universal a modernised version of the poor law system.

I do not dispute that in many people's minds there was and still remains some hazy "sentiment of charity" behind the adoption and retention of a system of public provision of medical care but the fact remains that there is intrinsically no element of charity in it. And that system which did truly depend on charity (loving giving) has been displaced and destroyed. The awkward but vital lesson which our increasingly expensive and decreasingly effective welfare services have to teach us is that sentiment, no matter how noble, and social engineering, no matter how elaborate, are no substitutes for personal loving concern.

MAX GAMMON

London

"Rubbish Theory"

IN HIS INTERESTING and astute article on "Rubbish Theory" (June) Michael Thompson makes brief reference to some work of mine on the same subject and along the same line of thought. He adds "Significantly she does not notice that she has failed to describe how the immigrants see the street." While this may be a valid point, doubtless it is still more significant that Dr Thompson himself has failed to describe how the immigrants see the street. I wonder why he thinks he has?

In a fleeting reference to Greek-Cypriot house-painting habits, he expresses the unexceptional view that people should be allowed to paint their houses as they like regardless of the canons of "good taste." Quite so. But this still tells the reader nothing about how the immigrant himself sees his house. Moreover this particular paragraph contains an amazingly sloppy and emotive remark in an article otherwise notable for its stringency. In disapproving of those who would like to legislate against uneducated or alien taste, Dr Thompson suddenly drags in the word "gas-oven." I had to read the paragraph three times before I was sure he really was referring not to the domestic gas-cooker, but to Auschwitz.

This sort of gratuitous attempt to add emotional resonance to a relatively trivial subject by invoking the 20th century archetype of horror is worse than inappropriate: it is offensive. Today, every twopenny journalist who wishes to give himself airs as a watch-dog against racism reaches mechanically for a cliché about gas-ovens, which in practice has the effect not of dignifying present-day squabbles but of debasing historical realities. Someone of Michael Thompson's calibre should be above this kind of rubbish-writing.

GILLIAN TINDALL

London

YES, MY REFERENCE to Gillian Tindall was a little snide. I apologise.

As a student of rubbish I was interested to see the way Gillian Tindall mustered her phraseology to render inappropriate my mention of the gas-oven. Sorry—I do not mention it, I "drag it in." This "offensive" object, as out of place as something the "watchdog against racism" has laid on the drawing-room carpet, is now ready for the full rubbish treatment: "amazingly sloppy", "emotive", "gratuitous", "cliché", "twopenny journalist giving himself airs" . . . "debasing."

The gas-oven did not get in by accident—I thought long and hard about it. Why, then, should I feel its inclusion to be appropriate and Gillian Tindall find it to be "worse than inappropriate"? The answer is that we disagree over the seriousness of my subject. I take rubbish theory very seriously because, among other things, of the way it reveals to us the chilling logic and reasonableness of extremist thought and behaviour. For Gillian Tindall, it is "a relatively trivial subject."

All I am saying is that to legislate against the way the Bubbles and the Darkies paint their houses is to legislate against *them*, and that such intolerance of ambiguity *taken to its logical extreme* leads to Auschwitz. Why, if the Bubbles and the Darkies are already being penalised by the market, should some members of our society be so eager to subject them to the full weight of the law as well? Gillian Tindall has, in her own quiet and admirable way, realised that this is the thin end of some unattractive wedge and has chosen to reject it. On this we are in agreement. We disagree only as to whether the thin end of a wedge is attached to a thick end—I say it is, she says it isn't.

I might add that when I discuss these patterns of thought and behaviour with colleagues whose families perished in Auschwitz, we are able to talk inoffensively of gas ovens, final solutions, and the like. Sometimes, we even laugh.

MICHAEL THOMPSON

Bath

Rathenau's Murder

ESTHER SALAMAN (in "Memories of Einstein", ENCOUNTER, April) is mistaken about Walter Rathenau's death. She arrived in Berlin near the autumn

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of 1922 and writes that the assault took place in 1925. Rathenau was murdered on 24 June 1922 because of political, not for anti-Semitic, reasons. Ernst von Salomon, who was one of the accomplices, visited Rathenau's mother after his release from prison and remained on good terms with her until her death. My late Jewish husband was one of von Salomon's close friends from 1929 until his death in 1972; Prussians seldom were anti-Semitic.

A. J. SALINGER-HORST

The Hague
Netherlands

I DID NOT SAY that Rathenau was murdered in 1925: he was already dead when I reached Berlin in August 1922. "Eugenie" was telling me (in 1925) about what had happened on the day of the murder three years before. The chief motive of the murderers may well have been political, but others rejoiced because a famous Jew had been killed. It was in the spring of 1923 that I heard that a crazy student (whom I knew) had hoped that "Einstein would be the next."

I had talks with several people, including Frau Einstein, about Rathenau, but did not think it was relevant to my "Memories of Einstein."

ESTHER SALAMAN

London

"Bands"

IT MAY BE invidious to go on with this correspondence ["Follies in the Middle East", Letters, May] but when Sir Harold Beeley [ENCOUNTER, July] refers disparagingly to the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust who in 1945–47 filled the overcrowded "illegal" ships making for Palestine as "bands"—bands of savages?—he reveals the then Foreign Office outlook, so remote from reality, of regarding such people not as human beings with their own passionate desires but as mere objects, mere pawns who should be moved across the board according to Foreign Office preferences.

T. R. FYVEL

London

The House of

BEN SONNENBERG, *who was to become the Richelieu of American public relations, was 12 years old when he arrived at Ellis Island from Brest Litovsk with no English, two sisters, and a mother in a shawl.*

Six years later, he was stumping through rural Michigan in his only suit selling small picture frames for family photographs. Four years after that he was married to a girl he'd known since boyhood on the Lower East Side. They had a two-room apartment and Ben was up and out each morning offering to turn obscure actors into living legends by squeezing their names into gossip columns. From them he moved on to big actors and from there (on the principle that "the corporation pays more than the actor") to corporations. He never liked to play it safe and he preferred the challenge of clients who were either big but anxious, or small but yearning to be bigger. His job, as he saw it, was "to polish up the escutcheon" of the big boys and, for the others, "to build large pedestals for small statues." He did this with such consistent flair that he earned the undying gratitude of his clients and a sizeable chunk of their stock.

Many another poor immigrant has struck it rich and remained a poor immigrant with a large bank account—embarrassing the patricians he aped. But

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BENJAMIN SONNENBERG who was a loyal supporter of ENCOUNTER for many years (and one of its closest readers and spotters of typographical and factual errors) died last November at the age of 77.

ALISTAIR COOKE, author and broadcaster, still does his regular "Letter from America" for the BBC.

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"Spiritual"

SIR HAROLD BEELEY [ENCOUNTER, July] has a strange understanding of the word "spiritual" if he thinks it excludes the desire of exiles to return to their land. He still insists on applying a racialist test (any other, he declares, is "unhistorical"!) to decide who is an "Israelite"—though he would not dream of applying such a test to decide who is an Englishman.

The present-day Palestinian Arabs, through no fault of their own, happen to be living in the land that was wrested by force from the Jews. This gives rise to a painful conflict of claims requiring a compromise, but involves no "denial of natural justice." There was certainly a denial of both natural justice and common humanity, however, in the official War-time policy of preventing thousands of Jews from escaping Nazi slaughter.

HYAM MACCOBY

London

I CANNOT HOPE to shake Mr Maccoby's apparent conviction that the justice of the Zionist claims is self-evident. But I doubt whether the arguments he uses will do much to persuade the unconverted. Take for instance this sentence:

> "The present-day Palestinian Arabs, through no fault of their own, happen to be living in the land that was wrested by force from the Jews."

The last occasion on which Palestine can be said to have been "wrested by force from the Jews" was in the second century of the Christian era, half a millennium before the Arab conquest of the country. Since the latter event the Palestinians "happen" to have been living in Palestine for 13 centuries before a British Government unwisely agreed to help the Zionists to wrest it back again.

HAROLD BEELEY

London

Sonnenberg

Sonnenberg began in his early twenties to groom himself as a grand seigneur, and nobody ever did it better.

HE MUST HAVE HAD **innate taste, and he had the good sense to marry a woman whose matching visual taste created the fabrics, the colours, the rooms—the stage, for the incomparable Sonnenberg performance as the grandee of Gramercy Park. Not long ago, two of Queen Elizabeth's equerries stayed the night there. They were ravished by the uniform style and grandeur of the place, by the absence of any seedy nook or cranny. "Buckingham Palace," one of them said, "was never like this."**

AND INDEED *very few of even the great houses of England preserve in all the showrooms, let alone the living quarters, the style of the whole. The noble tenants tend to stick up against the marvellous panelling of a great hall one of those mock-Jacobean standing lamps from the 1920's, with a shaggy shade around its shoulders, which makes it look like Lawrence of Arabia in ambush. Sonnenberg, ambling methodically through his 37 rooms, was always spotting a corner that might be enriched or enlivened with a jewel of a sconce, an antique brass weight, a butler's chair or an armorial plate. For over forty years he roamed through England (mostly) plucking a Sargent or a Sickert here, an Ingres or an Old Master drawing there, combining in his head, with the skill of a jig-saw champion, an Irish hunt table, a Welsh dresser, a Caroline silver tankard, precious china, sets of Chippendale, many exquisite Queen Anne or Georgian chests and settee beds, to bring them home to their proper setting: the 1845 house he bought (typically enough) in the depth of the Depression, when millionaires were back at square one. After the Stuyvesant Fishes left the house in 1909, it was broken up, along with the house next door, into studio apartments. Sonnenberg broke it all down again and recomposed the joined houses into a repository for his treasures.*

IT IS A GHOST HOUSE NOW, **shorn of the treasures (and the human warmth also) of its droll and generous host. Versailles without the Sun King. Except that No. 19 was the most livable of mansions. And even the most austere masterpiece was domesticated by the affection of its owner, by the friendly nod he gave to his favorites as he went off to dress himself to go on the town: in a four-button suit, a barber-pole striped shirt-front, Derby hat, Roman cuff links the size of silver dollars. I asked him once how he came to adopt this unchanging Edwardian get-up. "My dear boy," he said, "when I was about eighteen I looked in a mirror and decided that I was not pretty. To cut a swathe in this world, you have to have a public image. And the essential . . . mucilage—of a public personality is consistency. If you wear a four-button suit on Park Avenue, you wear a four-button suit at the beach."**

SO HE DID, *and Gramercy Park will forever be haunted by the jaunty little roly-poly figure appearing on the sidewalk like an eccentric fugitive from* Upstairs, Downstairs *and glancing up, with a chuckle of pardonable pride, at the greatest private town house in New York, and very likely in the United States: the house that Ben built.*

Alistair Cooke

in the Sotheby-Parke-Bernet 2-volume Catalogue of "The Benjamin Sonnenberg Collection" (June 1979)

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Ignazio Silone

MY LATE HUSBAND, Ignazio Silone, bequeathed his archive and correspondence to me with the understanding that I make them "available to future scholars." I have decided—on the basis of the archives, but with a great deal of other material that I must find elsewhere—to write his biography, probably in several volumes.

For this task I shall need the help of all friends, anyone and everyone who knew Silone before I met him (which was in December 1941), or who knew him since but in circumstances or places other than Rome, and would be so kind as to let me have their reminiscences of him; also of anyone possessing letters from him who would not mind sending me photostat copies; also anyone possessing, or knowing how to find, articles, etc., by him or concerning him—in any language. It would be best to send such material to me by registered post. If no acknowledgment from me is received, it means the letter has not reached me.

I need not say how grateful I should be for any help of this kind.

DARINA SILONE

Casella Postale 7196 Nomentano
00161 Rome
Italy

AUTHORS

Vilas Sarang was educated in Bombay and at Indiana University, and currently teaches English at the University of Basra in Iraq. His stories have appeared in *The Malahat Review, Mundras Artium, TriQuarterly,* and the Penguin anthology *New Writing in India. A Kind of Silence*, a collection of his poems, was published in 1977 by Writers' Workshop in Calcutta.

Raymond Aron, the French political philosopher, teacher, and journalist, is a Member of the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques, and Professor of the Collège de France. ENCOUNTER has published many of his analyses, including (in the September and October 1977 issues), "My Defence of Our Decadent Europe." His recent books include *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (Greenwood Press, 1977), and *History and the Dialectic of Violence* (Blackwell, 1979).

Peter Redgrove's latest book of poems, *The Weddings at Nether Powers* (the title poem appeared in ENCOUNTER) has just been published by Routledge.

Norman Nicholson's most recent book of poems is *A Local Habitation* (1973). He published an autobiographical work, *Wednesday Early Closing*, in 1975 (Faber), and in 1978 was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry.

Lawrence Gowing is Slade Professor of Fine Art at University College, London. Among his publications are studies of Vermeer, Matisse, and Constable.

Luigi Barzini sat as a Liberal member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies from 1958-72. His books include *The Italians* (1964), *From Caesar to the Mafia* (1971), and *O, America* (Hamish Hamilton, 1977).

François Bondy is an editor of the monthly *Schweizer Monatshefte* and of *Die Weltwoche* (Zurich), to which he contributes a regular column on people and politics in Europe.

Werner Höfer is a television producer for Westdeutscher Rundfunk in Cologne and is moderator of the long-running "Meet the Press" programme.

Jean-François Revel's works published in translation include *The Totalitarian Temptation* (Secker, 1977, Penguin ed. 1978) and *On Proust* (1972). He is a regular columnist for *L'Express* in Paris.

Anthony Thwaite's most recent book of poems is *A Portion for Foxes* (Oxford University Press); a study of *Twentieth Century English Poetry* (Heinemann) appeared in 1978.

Tom Paulin is a Lecturer in English at the University of Nottingham. He is the author of *Thomas Hardy: The Poetry of Perception* (Macmillan, 1976) and a book of poems, *A State of Justice* (Faber, 1977).

Alan Brownjohn's most recent volume of poems, *A Song of Good Life*, was published by Secker & Warburg in 1975.

Max Beloff was Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration, University of Oxford, from 1957-74, when he became Principal of the University College at Buckingham. His most recent book (co-author) is *The Government of the United Kingdom* (Weidenfeld, 1979).

Melvin J. Lasky's *Utopia and Revolution* (1976) is published by Macmillan, London, and University of Chicago Press.

Nicholas Rzhevsky, whose "Theatre Letter from Moscow" appeared in the June issue of ENCOUNTER, teaches in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Illinois, and is Acting Editor of the *Slavic Review*. He has written on Tolstoy, Leontiev, and Herzen, and is currently working on a study of Russian literature and ideology. (We regret that this note did not appear in the appropriate issue.)

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Life & Letters Today

Westminster

STIRRING: Ministers and their opposition shadows both show a certain common political style of confused benignity [Alan Watkins writes].

Indeed Mr William Whitelaw tends to respond to adverse comments in much the same was as Mr Merlyn Rees. Mr Whitelaw once bore down on a friend of mine who had written something about him and said: "Look here I can take a fair criticism. But I will not be told that I am stupid. I do not regard that as fair criticism. Let me assure you [this in a very loud voice], I-am-not-stupid." It was Mr Whitelaw, by the way, who once accused the Labour Government of "going around stirring up apathy."

THE OBSERVER

Hong Kong

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS: *Coca-Cola, that carbonated symbol of capitalism and the consumer society, returned to China yesterday after an absence of 30 years.*

Twenty thousand cases of the soft drink were loaded aboard a Hong Kong freight train late Tuesday, bound for the South China port city of Canton 90 miles from here. From Canton, this first shipment is to be distributed to tourist hotels and restaurants in Peking and Shanghai.

A $2-million Coca-Cola bottling plant will be built in Shanghai later this year.

Under an agreement signed last month in Peking, Coca-Cola was granted the exclusive right to sell cola drinks in the world's most populous country, shutting out Pepsico Inc., Coke's chief rival and the producer of Pepsi-Cola. As it happens, Pepsi has the cola monopoly in the Soviet Union.

Instead of the familiar Coke trademark, the 6.5-ounce bottles being marketed in China carry the Chinese characters "Ke Kou Ke Lo." This sounds roughly like "Coca-Cola" and translates as "Tastes Good, Tastes Happy."

LOS ANGELES TIMES

London

TROJAN PUNS: Whatever the final score on the Oresteia trilogy (music eventually irritating, performances uneven, text at least concise, general aura interesting), the pipsqueak aftermath *Of Mycenae and Men* (BBC 2) proved that Aeschylus, even adorned by BBC fuss, is preferable to Aeschylus hardly at all [as Philip Purser writes]. The one good joke was uttered by Diana Dors, splendid as a vast, raddled Helen. "I've had enough of menages a Troy", she declared.

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Hollywood

IGNOBLE SAVAGE: The virtuous name of Tarzan will be rigorously defended in a Los Angeles court this week by the family of his creator Edgar Rice Burroughs.

They are suing the producers and distributors of an X-rated cartoon called "Tarzoon—Shame Of The Jungle", for three million dollars for "destroying the good, wholesome image of Tarzan."

Jane, a virtuous creature in the original version (Maureen O'Sullivan is best known in the part) doesn't emerge as any saint in this new interpretation of the jungle hero. It's alleged she is now "aggressively sexually demanding, strident—and nude."

The suit alleges that Burroughs characterised Tarzan as handsome, strong and intelligent. That's certainly the way Johnny Weismuller, the most famous Tarzan of all, portrayed him. Now he is said to be "weak, stupid, physically unattractive, cowardly, lewd and sexually inadequate."

DAILY MAIL

New York

PROSA NOSTRA: *The Doublespeak Awards for 1978, which are intended to memorialize duplicitous language, even lies, are being presented today.*

The label Doublespeak is only one of many words coined to stigmatize expressions that shun directness and truth. In World War I, there was "Gobbledygook"—speech or writing that was long, pompous, vague and involved. Since then have come: "Pentagonese," "State Departmentese," "bureauquack," "bureaucratic indirect," "officialese," "Nixonese," "Ovaloid," "Zieglerrata," "Prosa Nostra" and "Doubletalk".

George Orwell, who wrote of Newspeak, advocated the counter-terrorism of verbal purification, and others have plumped for "Singlespeak". While pursuing malfeasance in official prose and public expression, the Doublespeak Committee also presents a George Orwell Award honoring those who distinguish themselves by defending, and even employing, truth and clarity. The award will go this year to Sissela Bok, author of "Lying: Moral Choice in Public Life."

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

London

CROSS WORDS: A yawning gap in the international publishing business is now about to be filled. "*Sheba*" will be the first Arabic-language glossy fashion magazine. To judge from the way bankers are queuing up to provide the finance and advertisers are bustling to take space, it is on to a gold mine.

Some rather special complications go with the editor's job. For *Sheba* will have to abide by the strict Arab notions of how women should appear in magazines. "In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in particular, we will have to be very careful," says Miss Zelfa Draz. "Some people still believe that showing an ankle is going too far."

The compiler of an in-flight magazine for an Arabian airline has already learned that fact the hard way. He put in a crossword puzzle clue, the answer to which was the word "caress." That was going too far. The whole puzzle was censored.

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

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Professor Hearnshaw writes here as an historian, not an apologist.

Cyril Burt: Psychologist by L.S. Hearnshaw £8.95
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